# Polyhedron®

NEWSZINE

DECEMBER

90

RPGA® NETWORK

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# Conventions

**Constitution II, January 22-24**
*Arlington, VA*
This convention will be held at the Quality Hotel (not the nearby Quality Inn) in Arlington, Virginia, just 10 minutes south of Washington, DC and 5 minutes from National Airport. We are offering 13 different RPGA tournaments in 7 slots, with Feature, Special, Members Only, Masters, and Grandmasters events. These include AD&D® game, RAVENLOFT® setting, Mighty Fortress, Shadowrun, TimeMaster, and more. Non-RPGA Network events include Vampire, Werewolf, miniatures, and board games, an original live action Vampire game, and of course the second annual Traditional Semi-Continuous Intermittent Clay-o-Rama Battle Pit of Death. Registration is $15 until January 1, 1994, $20 afterward and at the door. Write to: Constitution, 9807 Hollow Glen Place, Silver Spring, MD 20210-1139, or call (301) 608-0744.

**PrezCon, February 10-13**
*Charlottesville, VA*
This convention will be held at the Mount Vernon Best Western (boardgames) and the Day's Hotel (role playing). Tournaments featured include ASL, Advanced Civilization, Titan, Diplomacy, Silent Death, BattleTech, History of the World, AD&D game, Cyberpunk, Rolemaster, Call of Cthulhu, and more. Other events include live action Vampire (Brian Carney special guest), a dealer's room, open gaming, and a game sale. Pre-registration by January 15 is $20 and includes a free PrezCon T-shirt. Registration at the door is $20 but does not include a T-shirt. Send pre-registrations to: P.O. Box 5123, Charlottesville, VA 22905, or call Justin Thompson at (804) 823- 7433.

**Total Confusion, February 25-27**
*Worcester, MA*
This convention will be held at the Sheraton Worcester Hotel and Conference Center, 500 Lincoln Street (508) 852-4000. Scheduled events include AD&D game, Assault, Axis & Allies, Battletech, Call of Cthulhu, Car Wars, Champions, DC Heroes, Diplomacy, GURPS, Shadowrun, Space Hulk, and Star Wars—over 120 scheduled games. Also scheduled is a miniatures painting contest. Registration at the door is $10; pre-registration is $8/day or $23 for all three days. For more information or a preregistration packages, contact the Total Confusion Convention, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester, MA 01607, or call (508) 987-1530.

**Concentric, March 11-13**
*Chicago, Illinois*
Come to the center of the universe! Concentric Circle presents the new Midwest gaming convention in Chicago, Illinois. We offer 16 all-new RPGA events, including Feature, Benefit, Masters, Grandmasters, Chill, TORG, Star Wars, Vampire, the GAMMA WORLD® game, Shadowrun, and Living City. There will also be lots of miniature events, boardgames, and additional role playing events, plus an art show and auction, games auction, dealers' room with many demos of new products, sumptuous banquet, and a blood drive tied in with our Vampire event. Concentric will be held at the Ramada Hotel O'Hare. Early registration is $10 until October 1; pre-registration is $12 until February 1. Write for information to: Concentric, 114 Euclid, P.O. Box 287, Park Ridge, IL 60068.

**Little Wars, March 31-April 2**
*Rosemont, IL*
This miniatures-oriented gaming weekend, sponsored by the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society (HMGS) Midwest, will be held at the Ramada Hotel O'Hare. Admission is $8/day or $12/weekend, and there are event fees. HMGS members and judges receive a discount on admission. In conjunction with Little Wars will be the second Spring Fantasy Revel, featuring several AD&D game tournaments and other role playing games. Fees are the same as for Little Wars, but for an additional $3 over the one-convention fee, gamers may attend both events. Discounted lodging on-site is also available. For more information, write: Jeffrey Hammerlund, 107 West Chicago St., Algonquin, IL 60102.

**Clare-Voyance, April 8-10**
*Claremont, CA*
Held on the campuses of the Claremont Colleges (about 30 minutes east of Los Angeles). Events include the AD&D game, Shadowrun, RoboTech, Champions, Dangerous Journeys, an art display, and more. GMs welcome. Registration $5, with a $2 fee per game. Write to Games Central, Storyhouse, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA 91711. Call (909) 624-3413 or (909) 624-3664.

**Andromeda One, April 22-24**
*Lincoln, NE*
This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn at 141 N. 9th Street, and convention activities include RPGs, dealers' room, 24-hour video room, art show, and panel discussions. Guest of Honor: Katherine Kurtz. For more information, write to Duane Bouchard, 2848 S. 17, Lincoln, NE 68502, Compuserve 71762,1564.

**Wyvercon '94, June 17-19**
*Mount Vernon, WA*
This convention will be held at the Skagit County Fair Grounds. Featured events include an RPGA Network AD&D game tournament, a LaserTag arena, and a Saturday night dance. Other events include Battletech, Boffer Chess, a Lost Souls game, 24-hour open gaming, martial arts demos, a miniatures contest, costume contest, dealers', on- site food vendors, and more. On-site camping and RV spaces are available. Pre-registration through May 31, 1994 is $15 for the weekend. On-site registration is $20 for the weekend. Send registration fees or inquiries to: Skagit Valley Gamers Association/Wyvercon '94, P.O. Box 2325, Mount Vernon, WA 98273, or call: (206) 855-0197 and ask for Todd or Larianne.

**QuinCon IX, July 15-17**
*Quincy, IL*
A fantastic mix of role playing, miniature games, and board games featuring RPGA tournaments, special guests, and a Saturday auction. Nearly 70 events, featuring both new games and classic favorites. No game fees. For more information, send a SASE to QUINCON IX, c/o Mark Hoskins, 1181 Pratt Street, Barry, IL 62312. Admission fees are $5 for one day or $12 for the weekend.

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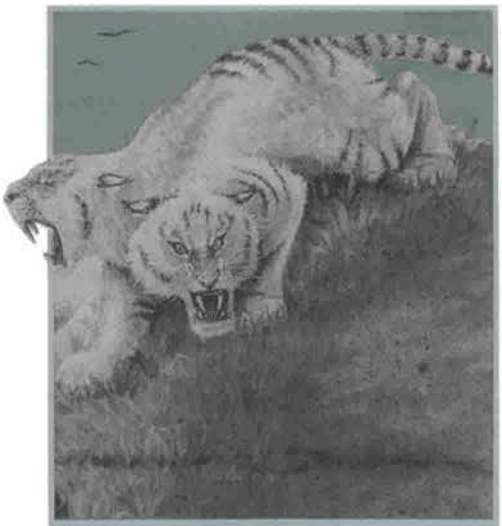

**About the Cover**

A lone warrior faces an unusual and deadly double-threat in Terry Pavlet's "Barbarian and Tiger."

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James Ward

**Editor**
Jean Rabe

**Associate Editor**
Dave Gross

**Graphic Director**
Larry Smith

**Cartographer**
Diesel

**Production Staff**
Skip Williams
Tracey Isler
Kevin Melka

**Subscriptions**
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# Notes From HQ

## A Challenge To The Membership

A few issues ago we discussed changing the name of the RPGA® Network.

We hoped a new name might attract new members. After all, the Network is 13 years old, and some of us have heard the comment, "I've gotten along without the Network so far, I don't need to join now." A new name might get people to take another look at us.

The bottom line was that we wanted more members.

Well, we certainly got responses from the Network about the name change proposal. Some of the letter-writers thought a new name was a great idea. Others said they didn't care what we called the organization, they'd still participate. But the overwhelming majority of letters said, "Don't change the name. Period."

And so the name remains the same. But now Network HQ needs your help to raise membership another way.

The bottom line still remains: we need more members. With more members we can have the resources to improve our services, add programs, and become more of a force in the gaming industry. Since we won't use a new moniker to attract attention, we need you to pitch in and help us build membership.

We'll even sweeten the pot with a membership drive contest.

### The Rules

Use the membership form inside this issue—you have our permission to make as many copies as you'd like. Print your name on the recruiter space, then pass the forms out to friends and hobby shops in your area. Encourage others to join, telling them about the fun and benefits of being in the RPGA Network.

Do not collect money. It is up to the prospective member to send in a check or money order.

**Deadline:** March 15, 1994.

### The Prizes

**First Prize:** The Network member who gets the most people to sign up by March 15 will receive a $300 (three hundred dollar) shopping spree through the Mail Order Hobby Shop, good for TSR, Inc. merchandise.

**Second Prize:** The Network member who recruits the second highest number of new members receives a $200 (two hundred dollar) shopping spree through the Mail Order Hobby Shop, good for TSR, Inc. merchandise.

**Third Prize:** The Network member who recruits the third highest number of new members receives a $100 (one hundred dollar) shopping spree through the Mail Order Hobby Shop, good for TSR, Inc. merchandise.

**Everyone Wins:** That's right—everyone who recruits a member wins something. For each new member you attract, you will receive a three-month extension on your own membership.

Just remember to fill in your name on the recruiter line so we can give credit where it's due.

That's the challenge. If every one of us recruits one member, there'll be more than 20,000 Network members!

### Pennsylvania and Ohio

I recently had the pleasure of attending AndCon near Cleveland and CosCon near Pittsburgh. Both conventions were filled with Living City activities. I heartily recommend these conventions to Network members. AndCon is set for September next year, and CosCon is over the Columbus Day weekend.

This year AndCon boasted three new Living City tournaments and an interactive event designed by veteran L.C. author Steve Glasgow. The plot had players scurrying about the hotel pool area picking up rumors, trading their characters' magic items, and bidding on goodies in a charity auction.

Malcolm Wood and his character, the current Deputy Mayor of Ravens Bluff, and James Alan and his character, the current Lord Speaker of the Advisory Council, were on hand to discuss politics and happenings in the city.

A few characters managed to save the city from a grisly fate in "Storm on the Horizon," written by Steve. Others fought against a less-lofty menace in "Death That Walks," by James.

Living City events were new to CosCon, run by the Circle of Swords gaming club (the largest Network club in the U.S.). The convention offered tournaments for first-level characters, giving veteran L.C. players an opportunity to start a second or third hero. (I ran a few of the tournaments and killed my first L.C. PC. The hapless fighter, played by member Dave Kelly, bled to death from snake bite wounds while his companions searched for treasure!

Most of the convention banter centered on "The Great Green Sheep Mystery," adroitly drafted by Steve Hardinger. Living City players had to solve the colorful mystery (which some of them did). Along the way, PCs talked to sheep, befriended a dog, and had a great time. If "The Great Green Sheep Mystery" is playing in your area, make sure to play it.

### Welcome Aboard

Network HQ's newest staff member is Kevin Melka of Milwaukee.

Kevin is a veteran tournament author and winner of the past two year's DM Invitationals (he can't compete now that he's on staff). Convention-goers probably recognize his name, as he's written dozens of Network events, including co-authoring the STAR and Rats series. Kevin takes over managing our tournament program.

### The West Coast

Members in California have complained about the lack of major conventions in their state. Complain no more! Origins lands in your laps this July.

The Network is planning a bevy of events there, but they won't happen without your help. As of this writing, only nine Network members have signed up to judge, and that's not nearly enough.

If you're planning a trip to Origins, set aside a few slots to run tournaments. Contact Network HQ, and we'll forward your name to the event coordinators.

Take Care,

Jean

# Letters

## Children And Dogs And The Living City

We just received a check in the fantastic amount of $3,000. Thank you for this more-than-generous donation to Okada, which was raised at the GEN CON® Game Fair.

We hope that you and your staff had a little fun along with the hard work. We enjoyed ourselves at the convention even if we did arrive ahead of schedule.

We repeat, THANK YOU. The monies that you have raised and donated on our behalf are needed and most appreciated.

Pat Putnam
Okada, Ltd.
Hearing and Specialty Guide Dogs
R.R. No. 1, Box 640F
Fontana, WI 53125

Thank you for the ROLE PLAYING GAMES ASSOCIATION™ Network's generous gift of $5,000 to the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin from your fund-raising at the 1993 GEN CON Game Fair. Your continued support of our special hospital is deeply appreciated.

Children's Hospital is committed to providing the best pediatric health care to children from Wisconsin and beyond. Gifts like yours help us continue to meet the special needs of every child who turns to Children's for care.

Thank you again for your support of our mission.

Jon E. Vice
President
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
9000 West Wisconsin Avenue
P.O. Box 1997
Milwaukee, WI 53201

*The money for the above organizations was raised through a special charity auction and through fees members paid to play in designated AD&D® game tournaments.*

*The Network will again support the Okada Guide Dog Program and the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin at next summer's GEN CON Game Fair.*

### Ravens Bluff Questions

My friend and I are new members who joined when we registered for the 1993 GEN CON Game Fair. It was our first time at the Game Fair and only our second convention ever. Naturally, we had a blast.

For both of us, though, our favorite events throughout the convention were the two Living City tournaments we played in. The concept of creating a character according to a set of standards, having that character transferable to other tournaments, and allowing players to participate in the creation of their gaming world are all splendid ideas.

We attended the Living City Seminar beforehand, but did not understand much of what was being talked about. Many of the people in the audience appeared to be longtime players/members in the Network and seemed to know each other quite well. We felt like outsiders listening in on past stories and inside jokes.

Don't get me wrong. This is okay and understandable, as it gives these players a venue to share their experiences. But those who are new and looking for answers and information on the very basics of what the Living City is all about need a time and place to ask our questions and be heard, too.

One thing we are wondering about. When creating a character at first level by assigning points, can elves have a 19 Dexterity if it is "purchased" with a point? (Similar questions are Dwarves' 19 Constitution, etc.) In other words, can the racial maximums for attributes be reached if "purchased"? Or is 18 the highest any race can ever attain? I feel 19 should be possible if "purchased" so long as racial limits are not exceeded. What is the official word?

I understand some rare individuals have tried to cheat by mysteriously acquiring treasures not earned through play or trade at the magic shop. I feel it is vitally important that this is monitored closely, as it reflects on the integrity of our entire campaign.

Also, as you can see by the return address, we don't live very close to any major American cities or Ontario, Canada. Therefore, we are not able to enjoy one of the biggest advantages of belonging to the RPGA Network, which is playing in Living City tournaments due to our remote location.

So, I need information on what is necessary to start having our own tournaments that would meet RPGA Network standards. Who is eligible to judge events? How is information relayed accurately to RPGA Network HQ to be consistent with other tournaments? What constitutes a tournament? Number in attendance? Number of events held? Number of days held?

Dennis R. Rose
Saskatoon, Canada

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*Thanks for your inquiries on the Living City. Your questions give us a great opportunity to fill the membership in on some of our plans for Ravens Bluff.*

*As far as the next Game Fair is concerned, there will be lots of Living City activities, including some for beginners. This issue of the Newszine carries a judge appeal form for Network activities at the next Game Fair. You can tell that there are at least three L.C. tournaments, and one of them is a benefit event.*

*There will be a "Living City Row," which will consist of the magic shop, land office, tavern (to pick up rumors and adventuring buddies), and more.*

*Also, there will be multiple Living City seminars, including one for people new to Ravens Bluff. Check out our Network Game Fair form.*

*To top it off, we'll be running more background information on Ravens Bluff in future issues of the Newszine.*

*As for racial maximums. Our guidelines state that 18 is the limit for initial scores. However, there are tournaments in which characters can acquire items allowing them to exceed those scores.*

*You mention cheaters. There are very few, and we catch them. Those characters are sentenced to the Ravens Bluff prisons to make big rocks into little rocks. Nearly all the people playing Living City events are honest.*

*As for tournaments. By all means, hold a game day of your own. Great sites include library meeting rooms, nursing home recreation rooms, hotel ballrooms, etc. Shop around your community and get the best deal. Some libraries offer free space. Start small. We suggest a one-day event with a couple of one-round tournaments. Make one of them a Living City event. Publicize your event in the POLYHEDRON® Newszine (free), and your local newspaper (probably also free). Send in a tournament request form to get the events you want, get your friends to judge the events, and go from there.*

*As for the size of a convention, there are no restrictions. Some conventions are as small as 40 people, especially if they are first-time, one-day events. Others draw thousands.*

*Having a mini-convention is certainly worth trying. Let us know how yours turns out.*

## Praise For Into The Dark

Just a note to say how much I enjoy the POLYHEDRON® Newszine. Please keep up the good work.

Into The Dark is for me a highlight of the magazine. I find reviews entertaining and useful. The first two paragraphs of the September review of "The Warrior and the Sorceress," as I am a fan of "Yojimbo" and an anti-fan of David Carradine, were wonderful. I hope this feature continues.

Please pass on my compliments to James Lowder.

Rex V. Settle
Okemos, MI

## Knights Of The Empire

I want you to know about something that my fellow Knights of the Empire members and myself have done. Last year four members of the Knights—Linda Baldwin, Albert Lavigne, Ruth Pinsky, and myself participated in the AIDS Walk in New York. The four of us, walking under our Network club banner, managed to raise a little more than $500 to benefit the GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis). GMHC is the nation's oldest AIDS organization. It provides direct services for men, women, and children with the AIDS virus in NYC and works for AIDS education worldwide.

Not content to rest on last year's accomplishments, we decided that our support for this worthy organization would be greater. With the recruitment of two additional walkers, Jonathan Fox and Reynolds Jones, we set out to achieve our objective. Through our efforts and the pledges of our sponsors this year, we raised $1,000. The Knights would like to thank all of our many sponsors, especially those who contributed to Albert Lavigne during the ConnCon gaming convention in Danbury, CT.

We also want to let the membership know that we will be walking again, and we pledge to do our best to raise even more money next year. If any of our fellow RPGA® Network members would like to join us next year in the walk, look for an upcoming classified ad in the POLYHEDRON Newszine.

David Samuels
President, Knights of the Empire
Brooklyn, NY

## Classified Ads

I recently sent a classified ad to this Newszine, which was printed in issue #86. I was asking for three DUNGEON® Adventures Magazines #2, #5, and #6.

After that, a few fellow Network gamers sent me price lists, but something strange happened. I received by mail copies of the three numbers I was looking for, but the package was anonymous. The only thing I know is that it comes from the city of Montreal in Quebec, and I can't think of who could have sent me this package.

So, here I am, looking for a way to thank this person. To the friendly Network gamer from Montreal—my thanks. Please write to me so I can thank you personally.

Stephen Leclerc
Quebec, Canada

## Game Fair Feedback

I would like to congratulate you on the superb selection of events that you ran at this past GEN CON® Game Fair. I found all the events I played in extremely enjoyable. Every year the events and judges seem to get better and better. Keep up the good work.

This year the RPGA Network express line for early pickup on Wednesday was the slowest of the lines. I thought one of the perks for being a member was express pickup, but I could have gotten faster service in either of the other two lines. Finally, the location of the Network Headquarters was terrible. It wasn't even possible to walk by the headquarters most of the times during the convention. Maybe next year it would be possible to find a slightly less-trafficked area for the headquarters to be placed. Overall, I enjoyed the Game Fair this year even though MECCA seemed to be going out of its way to take all the fun out of the convention.

Daniel R. Cunningham
Greendale, WI

*Thanks for the convention feedback, Daniel. We know there were times when the express line wasn't so "express." We will staff it with more people next year. The good news was, however, it was so busy because of the number of Network members attending the convention.*

*As for the location of Network HQ in the arena, we're pretty limited where we can hang our hats for the weekend. The room is big, clean, and air-conditioned. All plusses. And it likely will be the location of HQ next Game Fair. Also, it is right next to a nifty room where we'll run quite a few Network seminars.*

❑

# The Dragon's Den

## Taking The Game In The Right Direction

**by R.A. Salvatore**

As RPGA® Network Guest of Honor at this year's GEN CON® Game Fair, I was asked if I could get up on stage and say hello to the crowd at the annual Network breakfast.

This didn't sound like too much for RPGA Network Coordinator Jean Rabe to ask, considering the free meal I was getting.

I readily accepted.

Then I saw the GEN CON Game Fair program guide mentioned me as a "featured speaker" at the breakfast, and I realized that Jean had corralled me, roped me, and hauled me in.

Well, I know, and you know, that "featured speakers" are supposed to say more than "Hi!" which left me sitting in the Hyatt in Milwaukee with a blank look on my face and a hotel pen in my hand, trying to put something together.

Fortunately, the program guide went on to tell me what I was supposed to be talking about: the past and future of gaming.

Fortunately?

I began my breakfast speech before a crowd of 400 by expressing my sincere feelings on this topic. Having me, a once-a-week, two-convention-a-year player, stand before of a room full of the core members of the RPGA Network and talk about the past and future of gaming was akin to my going to Houston to talk to NASA officials about the past and future of the space program.

But I slipped through it, focusing my talk on people I have come to know and truly respect. For the "past" segment, I used the opportunity to playfully attack FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting creator, game designer, and novelist Ed Greenwood—that was fun. For the "future" segment, I turned to more serious fare and told the gathering about Billy Wallace and his "Dragon's Den."

That's what this article is about, and that's why I called this article "Taking the Game in the Right Direction."

At this past GEN CON Game Fair (and the one before it), I heard many people discussing the need to bring younger players into the role playing game hobby.

During the past few years we have seen many products, such as TSR's new DRAGONSTRIKE™ game, aimed at the younger player. Discussions among convention committees often pose the question, "How can we get the younger players to come in?"

We who have been playing role playing games for many years have seen the value these games have added to our lives; it is natural that we want to encourage young people to join us. Often, troubled young people share in the gaming experience to find within their own imaginations a sense of joy or of value. But how to attract them? And how to ensure that a young person's introduction to the role playing genre becomes a worthwhile experience?

Enter Billy Wallace and his "Dragon's Den," where anyone can participate in role playing games.

The shop is open to all ages, is a controlled-substance-free center, and charges only a nominal admission fee for those who want to play games. Billy Wallace calls it a "mental gym to exercise the imagination."

To understand the Dragon's Den, you have to understand Billy Wallace. Coincidentally, Billy and I grew up less than a block from each other in the town of Leominster, Massachusetts, which hails itself as "The Plastics Pioneer City."

We knew each other—sort of; but since Billy is a few years older than I, we didn't really hang out together.

I find it remarkable that both of us found it into the world of fantasy, completely independent of each other. When I went to the Dragon's Den to see Billy in the summer of 1992, it was exactly the second time we had seen each other since we were kids.

Perhaps our independent journeys came from watching family and older friends suffering through difficult careers in menial jobs in those infamous plastics' factories. Perhaps it was wrought of frustration, from growing up across the street from dirty gray smokestacks, spewing their chemicals into air that long ago became thickly visible.

I don't know where Billy went when his family moved out of the apartment down the street from my house. Billy describes himself as a "street kid," a high school drop-out involved with drugs. He did 14 years in the Navy as a RADAR and Radio Communications coordinator, but what truly saved him from a wasted life was a love for literature. Billy used his imagination to insulate himself from harsh realities.

It was in the Navy that Billy discovered his other love: gaming. When he got out of the service in 1988, he decid-

ed that rather than jump into a conventional career, he would find a way to pursue those loves.

He followed a long trail, exploring, testing, and finally, on April 1, 1992, opening the Dragon's Den in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, a city of about 40,000.

Fitchburg is a tough place.

Unemployment is high, racial relations and relations between area college students and "townies" can be strained. And like so many other mid-sized American cities, Fitchburg has seen a rise in the kind of street violence more often associated with the larger metropolitan areas.

So where did Billy put his Dragon's Den? Right in the heart of one of the area's most troubled sections.

Billy is not in the gaming hobby for the money—one visit to the Dragon's Den will show you that. He'll tell you that he keeps going by selling gaming products and snacks, by charging a nominal admission and a small rental fee for the air-conditioned back room, and by the generous donations of some, mostly adult patrons, who have come to see the value of the place.

In truth, Billy keeps going by watching and feeding off of the positive effect his establishment is having on the regulars, mostly teenagers.

Ask him how he's doing, and he won't mention anything financial. He'll give you the latest anecdote of a new player who came in troubled and has subsequently found focus and purpose in life.

These anecdotes are all too common now, because the Dragon's Den is much more than a hang out for gamers. It is a safe haven amid troubled streets, a place where kids can go—and more than a few parents in Fitchburg breathe a sigh of relief knowing their children are there.

Behind it all is Billy, the street kid who found discipline in the Navy and who demands discipline of his patrons. Billy dangles the carrot of enjoyable gatherings and exciting adventures in front of these teenagers, and in return demands from them that they follow these rules:

1. No drinking
2. No drugs
3. No physical contact

Furthermore, high-school-age patrons are required to attend their classes, and Billy will call the school and/or their parents to confirm. The formula is simple: if a kid doesn't show up in school, he can't go into the Dragon's Den that night.

By all measures, this simple formula hasn't turned kids away from Dragon's Den; it's kept them in school. In addition, if a regular doesn't show up as expected, Billy won't hesitate to call his or her parents to find out what's going on, to let them know that their child isn't where he or she is supposed to be.

In the year-and-a-half he's been open, Billy and his various assistants have created a long list of success stories like the one about the kid who needed a summer job—not an easy thing to find in the Fitchburg area in these times.

Though he couldn't really afford to pay another person at that time, Billy offered the kid a summer job—if (here's that important "if" again) the kid showed an excellent end-of-school-year report card.

Guess who got good grades.

I've no doubt that Billy saw himself in that youth, and in most of the kids who come into the Dragon's Den to play. Five minutes talking to Billy will convince you that he's an intelligent and articulate man who could have, with the right kind of push, graduated from high school and from college, probably with honors. He missed that chance in his own youth, but because of his dedication, many of his patrons won't.

Billy's not going to get rich running the Dragon's Den. He'll be lucky if he can continue to scrape together enough funds to keep the place open through the winter.

But however long the Dragon's Den survives, Billy will come away from it with a lifetime of satisfying memories. And so many other people, especially kids, will come away from the Dragon's Den with discipline and motivation, a sense of value and purpose—beyond anything they ever would have dreamed.

As one involved with fantasy, who has heard so many whispers of "demons," and "evil" from perhaps well-intentioned, but ultimately ignorant people, I find the whole story of the Dragon's Den a shining light for the role playing game hobby. Those of us who are experienced and (unfortunately) older gamers should take a good look at this establishment, should take a good look at how this hobby that we so love can become so important in the lives of troubled kids.

The future of gaming? I don't know, but certainly the Dragon's Den is a step in the right direction.

The Dragon's Den, an RPGA Network Retailer, is located at 183 Lunenburg Street, Fitchburg, MA 01453, telephone (508) 343-8138.

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# Marvelous MaGuffins

## Magical Items For The AD&D® Game

*A contest among the official Network clubs to invent magic items netted a bevy of fascinating devices. The best of the entries are presented here, with the authors' names following their creations. There are many contests open only to Network clubs. If you'd like to get in on the fun, write Network HQ for a club form.*

### Anklets of Sure Footing

It is popularly believed by most sages that the wizard who invented these items served on a pirate ship based in the Corsair Domains. Legend has it that the mage did not adapt well to life at sea; the ship's pitching and rolling as it rode the waves made it impossible for the mage to cast spells. After months of research, he enchanted a pair of anklets that would make his life at sea easier. The anklets were woven from kelp, and the mage dubbed them *anklets of sure footing.*

Both anklets must be worn, and they do not function if covered by footwear or cloth. The wearer is never affected by seasickness and can move at normal speeds across ship decks, even under treacherous conditions such as mountainous waves and gale-force storms. Spellcasting is not hampered by the ship's movement, as the anklets ensure the caster's steadiness.

In addition, the wearer can climb rigging as easily as he can walk, and he can fight and cast spells from the rigging as if he were standing on solid ground.

Although the anklets can be worn by any race and class, they are highly sought after by sea-faring rogues and spellcasters.
XP Value: 2,000
GP Value: 16,000
*by Chris Ryan*

### Aslyferund's Armor

Ages ago when Myth Drannor was still a thriving elven metropolis there lived an armorer named Aslyferund, who fashioned fine elvish chain mail.

One day, another armorer by the name of Grelifgray moved nearby. He, too, knew the secret of forging elven chain and soon started taking some of Aslyferund's customers.

Aslyferund became furious and started adding more design and detail to his armor. This in turn made Grelifgray also exceed his prior creations. Grelifgray even went so far as to have a mage enchant his armor.

Aslyferund knew at this point he could not better Grelifgray's work and felt disgraced. He left Myth Drannor and traveled from town to town, doing odd jobs in exchange for food and lodging. While traveling overland one day during a terrible rainstorm, he sought shelter in a cave. After drying off, Aslyferund discovered that he was not alone.

Peering at him from the back of the cave was a massive, ancient gold wyrm. Aslyferund fell to his knees, begging for his life. The dragon laughed and told Aslyferund that she was good and kind and did not eat elves. They talked for hours, and soon the dragon learned of Aslyferund's woes.

The dragon decided to help Aslyferund—but only if he could do her a favor. She explained to Aslyferund that she had always wanted a crown, one that held the most beautiful gems from her horde. If he could fashion such a thing for her, she would show him how to make his armor rival Grelifgray's.

Aslyferund immediately set to work and in three months created a monstrous crown bedecked with the most exquisite gems and jewels from the dragon's horde. As she touched the crown her eyes misted over, and huge tears rolled down her cheeks, landing on her stomach scales, glistening and sparkling as they went.

She reached a massive claw to her stomach and tugged loose six of her golden scales that had been struck by her tears. She then gave these scales, the size of small shields, to Aslyferund and explained that by working each into breastplates, he could create armor that would make the wearer immune to natural and magical fire, chlorine gas—and more. The wearer of the armor would be like the ancient wyrm herself, immune to nonmagical missile fire and impervious to blows by normal weapons. Only magical weapons would harm the wearer.

Aslyferund thanked the dragon profusely and returned to Myth Drannor with his newfound knowledge. He spent the next year fashioning six suits of elven chain mail with gold dragon scale breast-plates. The suits of armor were like no other, and each bore Aslyferund's mark, three holly berries etched in gold, in the center of the chest. The suits were as light as leather, but much stronger. They are considered *chain mail +5.*

Grelifgray immediately offered a fortune for the secret of the armor's making, but Aslyferund refused to share it with anyone. Soon the king heard of the armor's existence and wished to purchase a suit for himself. When he and his escort reached Myth Drannor, however, they found Aslyferund murdered and his home a wreck. All six suits of Aslyferund's armor were missing, and to this day the armor's whereabouts is a mystery.
XP Value: 10,000
GP Value: 90,000
*by Todd Lambertson*

### Bag of Many Bags

This cloth sack is indistinguishable from any other sack normally found in a market square. However, if a *detect magic* spell is cast, a faint aura of evocation magic will be discovered.

The sack will hold any mundane or magic items placed within—to the normal capacity of the bag. However, its magical nature cannot be called into play unless it is empty. When placed on the ground and the word "backpack" is spoken, the *bag of many bags* transforms into a normal canvas backpack. The words "flask," "small sack," "large sack," "belt pouch," "bucket," "vial," and "water skin" will have like effects on the *bag.*
XP Value: 1,000
GP Value: 2,500
*by Scott Douglas*

### Bag of Teleportation

This item is a simple, well-made leather bag, roughly 10" wide, tall, and deep. A few (5%) are as large as duffel bags. When something is put into the bag, and its drawstrings are pulled closed, the item in the bag is *teleported without error* to a predetermined location.

Only items that can fit into the bag can be teleported. The destination is usually programmed into the bag during construction. And the location is usually something obscure and related to the bag's original owner, such as "the

third floor alcove of Wizzengerd's tower," or "behind the bar at Skully's." the location can be changed or established only via a *wish* or *limited wish* spell.

When a *bag of teleporting* is found, there is initially no way of telling it apart from a normal bag. Individuals using the *bag* might think it a *bag of devouring,* as the item inside disappears. Further, there is no simple way to determine where items are being teleported. Careful use of spells such as *divination, contact other plane,* or scrying will work, however.

*Bags of teleporting* are sought by thieves who do not want to get caught with stolen treasure, and by sages who use them for sending messages.
XP Value: 2,500
GP Value: 10,000
*by M. Sean Conry*

### Browdow's Ring of Utmost Weapon Harm

This platinum mithril alloy ring has a small pearl on the top and can be worn only on the fingers of warriors. Other individuals who try to wear the ring find that it is too small for any finger.

Only eight such rings were fashioned, created nearly 200 years ago by Browdow, a dwarven cleric of Clangeddin Silverbeard. When worn, the ring bestows a +1 "to hit" and +2 to damage—in addition to any other bonuses the wearer or his weapon has.

Further, the ring can grant the following abilities once a day, at the wearer's command. The abilities cannot be used in concert.

**1.** The wearer's Strength score is increased to 18/00 for five consecutive melee rounds.

**2.** During five consecutive melee rounds, all the wearer's successful hits inflict maximum damage.

**3.** The wearer is healed eight hit points.

**4.** The wearer is automatically successful with one weapon attack. The wearer must state he or she is calling on this ability, and then does not roll to hit the target.

If the wearer calls upon all four of the ring's special abilities in one day, he or she suffers a temporary loss of two points of Constitution. This can be regained after eight hours of sleep.
XP Value: 7,500
GP Value: 19,000
*by Theodore Stadtlander*

### Enchanted Leaves

Several versions of this magic item have been documented, each valuable and useful. All magical leaves are pieces of fine cloth, cut in the shape of an oak, cherry, or walnut leaf and imbued with magic. The leaves vary in size from three inches long to nearly one foot long, and they can be found in practically any color.

*Leaf of his tree:* This leaf reveals an object's history. The history appears written out on the leaf when the leaf is placed upon the object. If the leaf is placed on a magic item, any command words are revealed. The writing is always in a language the user can understand, but the user must be able to read to use the leaf. A *leaf of his tree* can be used once a day by wizards or priests. If the entire history is too long to fit on the leaf, only the portion that fits is revealed. The user can get the remaining history by placing the leaf on the object again the next day. If more than one day passes, or if the leaf is used on another object, the user must start the process over again.
XP Value: 2,500
GP Value: 8,000

*Leaf of pajon tree:* This leaf can become any article of clothing desired. For example, it can transform into peasant rags, warm fur boots, or a bejeweled velvet cloak. Such a *leaf* can be used only once, and it retains its form as the chosen article of clothing until destroyed. These *leaves* can be used by any class.
XP Value: 500
GP Value: 2,500

*Leaf of convik tree:* This leaf creates a 10′ × 10′ × 10′ cage that only can be opened and closed by the holder of the leaf. The leaf can be used once a day, and retains its cage shape for one hour. It can be used by priests and thieves.
XP Value: 1,750
GP Value: 4,000

*Leaf of kemes tree:* This leaf, useable only by wizards, can transform into any potion named by the holder. Such a leaf can be used only once.
XP Value: 1,000
GP Value: 2,500

*Leaf of mistree:*When torn into pieces, mixed with water, and consumed, this leaf has a random effect on the imbiber. Roll 1d8 and consult the following list:

**1.** Bestows infravision up to 120′ for one hour.

**2.** Heals 1d10 points of damage.

**3.** Acts as a *neutralize poison* spell.

**4.** Allows imbiber to *levitate* as per the wizard spell for one hour.

**5.** Grants an *augury* spell, as if the imbiber were a priest.

**6.** Improves the imbiber's armor class by 2 for 24 hours.

**7.** Allows the imbiber to walk on water as if he were wearing a *ring of water walking* for one hour.

**8.** Allows the imbiber to speak with animals and plants, as per the priest spells for three hours.
XP Value: 2,000
GP Value: 4,000
*by Steven Hurovitz*

### Loquacious Lyre

A dozen of these enchanted musical instruments exist, and they are much sought after by bards. The instruments are intelligent and have Neutral alignments.

A *loquacious lyre* provides a +3 to any bard's musical instrument proficiency. A bard who does not have the musical instrument proficiency, gains the ability. However, the lyre bemoans the fact that any bard could be so ignorant to not know how to play such a melodious and perfect instrument.

Once each day the lyre can sing accompaniment to the bard's voice, providing harmony in any key. It is telepathic with its owner, but also can "speak" using its strings so it can chat with others. It speaks five languages, in addition to Elvish, Dwarvish, and Common.

A *loquacious lyre* can cast *charm person* three times a day by speaking or singing. It can cast *detect magic* once a day, and once a week it can identify items as a bard of 10th level.

Loquacious lyres are made of polished bone carved with a delicate elven face near the top. They are inlaid with many gems, and are strung with copper, silver, and gold wires. They are useable only by bards. Each lyre has an Intelligence of 16, an Ego of 15, and a Personality Score of 31.
XP Value: 2,000
GP Value: 21,000
*by Carla Hollar*

### Money Changer:

Roughly three dozen of these items are believed to exist, and all of them look

the same—a warm-to-the-touch box made of dull gray metal that is three inches wide, three inches high, and 12 inches long. There is one slot on the top of the box, and one on the bottom; each is large enough to manage a big coin. Those looking into a slot see only a blob of moving, molten metal.

Near the slot on the top are buttons made of different metals: copper, silver, bronze, electrum, gold, and platinum.

The box is used to convert coins to different currencies of the same value.

For example, if a gold coin is put in the slot and the silver button is pressed, 10 silver pieces are released. Pressing the copper button releases 200 copper pieces. Pressing the gold button releases a gold coin of a different minting; a gold danter might become a gold bicenta.

The box cannot be used to create coins of greater value. Only exact conversions are made.

XP Value: 1,000
GP Value: 3,000
*by Nigel Wallis*

### Ring of Fearlessness

A *ring of fearlessness* is a delicate band of silver set with a small ruby. Though dainty, it is a powerful magic item that can be worn by men or women of any class and race.

It is uncertain how many of these deadly rings exist. A Waterdhavian wizard, Julius Silverheart, made several of them in 762 DR. At the time, Silverheart was instructing a rather disappointing apprentice named Jed. Silverheart knew that Jed lacked courage, and Silverheart—known for his bravery—saw this cowardice as a great failing. Wanting Jed to lead a full and adventurous life, Silverheart crafted a *ring of courage* for him, then was reported to have made a few more in the hopes of selling them to others like his apprentice.

Jed was given the ring on his birthday with no mention of its magical properties. He wore the ring constantly until his death 19 days later. Seeing a woman menaced by more than a dozen thugs, Jed charged to her rescue and was quickly slain. The thug's leader stole the ring, and a few days later made the mistake of provoking a skilled adventurer, Bonecrusher Aulwait, who slew the fearless thug and acquired the ring.

During the next two decades, Bonecrusher killed seven dragons and numerous other monsters and gained a reputation for calmness in the most deadly situations. The ring was passed on to his son, who was more confident than capable in a fight.

In the centuries that followed, one or more of the rings found their way onto the fingers of the Realms' greatest heroes; the Paladin Sara of Tyr, Duke Milios, and the peasant hero Bill.

The number of people who died because they did not have the ability to match the confidence the ring bestowed remains unknown.

A *ring of courage* makes its wearer immune to natural or magical fear and reduces the wearer's Wisdom by 2. The wearer believes he can handle any dangerous situation and acts accordingly. To a skilled adventurer, such a ring can be an asset. To anyone else, the ring is a death sentence.

The ring can be removed at any time, though the Wisdom loss remains. There are no restrictions on who can use this ring.

XP Value: 1,000
GP Value: 12,000
*by Nigel Wallis*

### Sticky Shield

The *sticky shield* is a medium-sized shield of hard metal. It can carry any heraldic device, but a hoofless horse is the most common. The *sticky shield* acts in every respect as a *shield +1*. However, in truth it is a much more powerful magic item.

When the shield-bearer's opponent rolls a 1 on his "to hit" die, his weapon automatically becomes stuck to the shield. The weapon is torn from his grip without so much as a saving throw. If a magic weapon becomes stuck, the *sticky shield* becomes even more powerful. The magical bonus of the weapon is added to the *shield's* plus to defend its bearer. For example, if a *long sword +2* gets stuck to the *sticky shield,* the shield's magic increases to +3. The more magical weapons that get stuck, the better the *shield* bearer's armor class becomes. Up to four weapons can be stuck to the shield.

The weapons only can be released after one hour or if the shield bearer speaks a command word. At that time, the shield loses any bonuses it acquired from holding magical weapons.

XP Value: 3,000
GP Value: 20,000
*by Rocco Pisto*

### Scimitar of the Sands

When first gazing upon this weapon, most assume it is just an ornamental blade because the entire weapon—including the hilt and crossquillons—is made of glass. However, the glass has been magically enhanced to make it as strong and durable as any steel sword. The hilt magically adjusts to the wielder's hand to provide a secure grip.

This +1 (or rarely +2) weapon can be used by anyone proficient with scimitar. If the wielder has the nonweapon proficiency of display weapon prowess, then during a successful display (proficiency check) a curtain of whirling sand (10′ × 10′ × 5′) can be made to appear up to 20′ in front of the blade. The curtain operates in all ways as a *dust curtain* spell (from the *Arabian Adventures* rule book) except that it lasts for 1d4 rounds.

Once per day the *scimitar* can cast the *hissing sands* spell, as if cast by a 10th level wizard. The sand movement is controlled by pointing the tip of the weapon in the desired direction. In addition, when the weapon is held, the wielder can at will pass without a visible trace across the desert, as per the *traceless travel* spell.

Finally, the wielder is protected from the blinding effects of sand. This includes sand blown by the gentle breeze to grains whirling about in sandstorms.

Although the identity of the individual who first developed this enchantment to create a *scimitar of the sands* has been lost, a few sand mages in Zakhara have discovered that the use of the *sand sword* spell followed by other, secret incantations will turn steel scimitars into glass. Further, one or more *glassteel* spells are cast upon the finished weapon, as are *enchant an item* and *permanency* spells.

XP Value: 3,500
GP Value: 17,000
*by Chris Ryan*

### Spider's Boots of Stealth

"Spider" was the nickname of the premier thief of the city of Rel Astra. None knew his real name, his origin, nor anything else about him, which was precisely the way the thief wanted it. Spider was a loner, a half-elf who formed no close relationships with anyone in the Rel Astran Thieves' Guild.

There could be no doubt that he was the finest and most successful burglar in living memory, and his loyalty to the guild was never in question. Still, those in the guild considered him a malevo-

lent menace. He was undeniably evil (and openly admitted so). This fact, plus his appearance and dress, led to rumors that he was a worshipper of Lolth, the spider queen.

Spider was obsessed about his alias and nickname, and was very flamboyant when on a caper. His face was tattooed in a web-pattern, and much of his clothing was embroidered with similar motifs. His boots and cloak were known to be enchanted, and speculation was rife whether he had found the items in his travels and they had subsequently shaped his personality and tastes. Regardless, it was known he had at least three additional pairs of the enchanted boots made so that one pair would always be clean.

*Spider's boots of stealth* are black, calf-length suede boots with a crisscrossing pattern of silver webs. They act as *slippers of spider climbing*. However, when worn by a thief their other powers become known. The boots increase a thief's abilities to move silently and hide in shadows by 15%. In addition, the thief can move along natural webs at a rate of 6 and cannot be stuck in any kind of natural or magical web.
XP Value: 3,500
GP Value: 25,000
*by Mike Whelan*

### Tunnelrunner's Axe

Aeons ago, the dwarves of the north lived in the kingdom of Delzoun. This realm was peppered with dwarven citadels, large and small, and their metal crafts were seldom rivalled. As mining was the lifeblood of the dwarves, their mines—especially those with mithril veins—were the heart of Delzoun.

As the sturdy folk worked and prospered, the increasingly frequent raids by orcs and goblins became a growing nuisance. These humanoid incursions began to menace the dwarven communities. After innumerable clashes in the outlying mines of Delzoun, one dwarven defender crawled out of these pits of death and into legend.

Amidst the chaotic frenzy of bloody beards and flying goblin heads, Tunnelrunner of Clan Irongrip turned the tables on the evil raiders. The raging warrior led inspired attacks to the very hearts of the invaders, his axe permanently removing any evil thoughts from their leaders' minds (i.e., their heads from their shoulders).

Tunnelrunner continued to roam the fringes of dwarven society, a free agent in the defense of all that was good and sturdy. His fate is unknown, but stories told by forgelight imply that Tunnelrunner met his demise when he ravaged the lair of a large orcish force—alone.

Tunnelrunner did indeed take on slightly more orcs than he and his trusty axe could handle. And upon his death, Tunnelrunner's stalwart soul was gently carried to the mountains of the dwarvish gods by the scarred, leathery hands of Clangeddin Silverbeard himself. At Tunnelrunner's behest, a portion of his spirit was channelled into his old axe, so that he could continue to protect his people.

The weapon appears to be an old dwarvish battle axe, showing only faint enchantment magic if such is checked for. It has a head of polished steel and a very keen edge. The haft is of stout oak, deeply stained from the axe's grisly past. It is shod with a beaten steel cap that resembles a dwarven helmet. Amongst the many scores and notches on the haft is carved the original owner's name—Tunnelrunner. These letters cannot be removed or defaced by any means short of destroying the axe.

Any good dwarf who holds the axe and speaks the name "Tunnelrunner" will hear the dwarven hero's voice in his mind. The hero will tell of his past battles and the axe's magical nature, and urge that the wielder continue to defend against evil. The axe's enchantments will then reveal themselves.

The weapon is a *battle axe +3*. Once each day the wielder can ask the axe to bestow a "tunnelrunning" ability, which lasts for three turns. This is similar to the *spider climb* spell, except that the affected dwarf's hands need not be empty. With this power the axe wielder can run up a wall and stand freely on the ceiling while continuing to swing the weapon in combat. This tunnelrunning ability is not subject to a dwarf's ability to resist magic.

Should the wielder ever commit an evil act, or fail to protect goodly folk against evil, then *Tunnelrunner* ceases communicating. The hero's spirit withdraws the enchantments from the axe, leaving the wielder a simple, worn weapon. If the wielder atones for his actions, the hero may allow the enchantments to return.

The weapon is rumored to lie at the bottom of a "mountain" of orc skeletons. Legends say a skeletal dwarvish hand is amid the pile, clutching an old scarred battle axe, its stained oaken haft carved with the word "Tunnelrunner" in Dwarvish runes.
XP Value: 6,000
GP Value: 65,000
*by Mike Whelan*

### Rod of Equestrians

A *rod of equestrians* can be identified as such by the stylized horse's head ornately crafted at the top. The other end of this three-foot-long shaft can be plain or have a horseshoe or round ball. The rod is most often carved of wood, though a few metal versions have been reported.

A *rod of equestrians* has 4d10 charges when discovered and can be recharged.

A single charge allows the wielder to cast a *mount* spell as an eighth level wizard. Expending two charges allows the user to cast a special version of *phantom steed* as a 14th level wizard. The "spooking" effects the steed usually has on animals does not apply.

To use this item, the wielder must grip the rod with both hands at the top, just below the horse's head, hold it in front of his body at waist height, incline the top of the rod forward at a 45-degree angle, and then gallop forward three yards while saying the command word.

About one-fourth of these rods have the added utility of also serving as a magical weapon. The bottom is used as a bludgeon as powerful as a horse's kick; 1d6+1 points of damage are delivered on a successful strike, which is made with a +3 "to hit" probability.
XP Value: 5,000
GP Value: 23,000
*by Nigel Wallis*

### Utensils of the Cultured Palate

These eating utensils are usually of the highest quality workmanship, though they may be made of almost any material. They consist of a cup, knife, fork, and spoon, normally very ornate and usually carried in a special pouch or box.

When used, the utensils make any food or drink—no matter what its quality or age—taste like any food or drink the consumer desires. The food is as nutritious and satisfying as the imagined meal. The quantity of the food is not affected.
XP Value: 400
GP Value: 2,000 to 18,000 (depending on the materials and workmanship in the utensils)
*by Peter Kuti*

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# The New Republic Campaign

by Bill Slavicsek

Last time out (in issue #86), I talked about *preparing* to move a campaign for *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* forward in time from the movie trilogy. This preparation started with a significant event discussed in *Return of the Jedi*. The Alliance's Supreme Commander, Mon Mothma, announced that "many Bothans died to bring us" the location of the second Death Star. This sparked an adventure tailor-made for Rebel PCs, and that adventure was the subject of the previous column.

## When Last We Left Our Heroes . . .

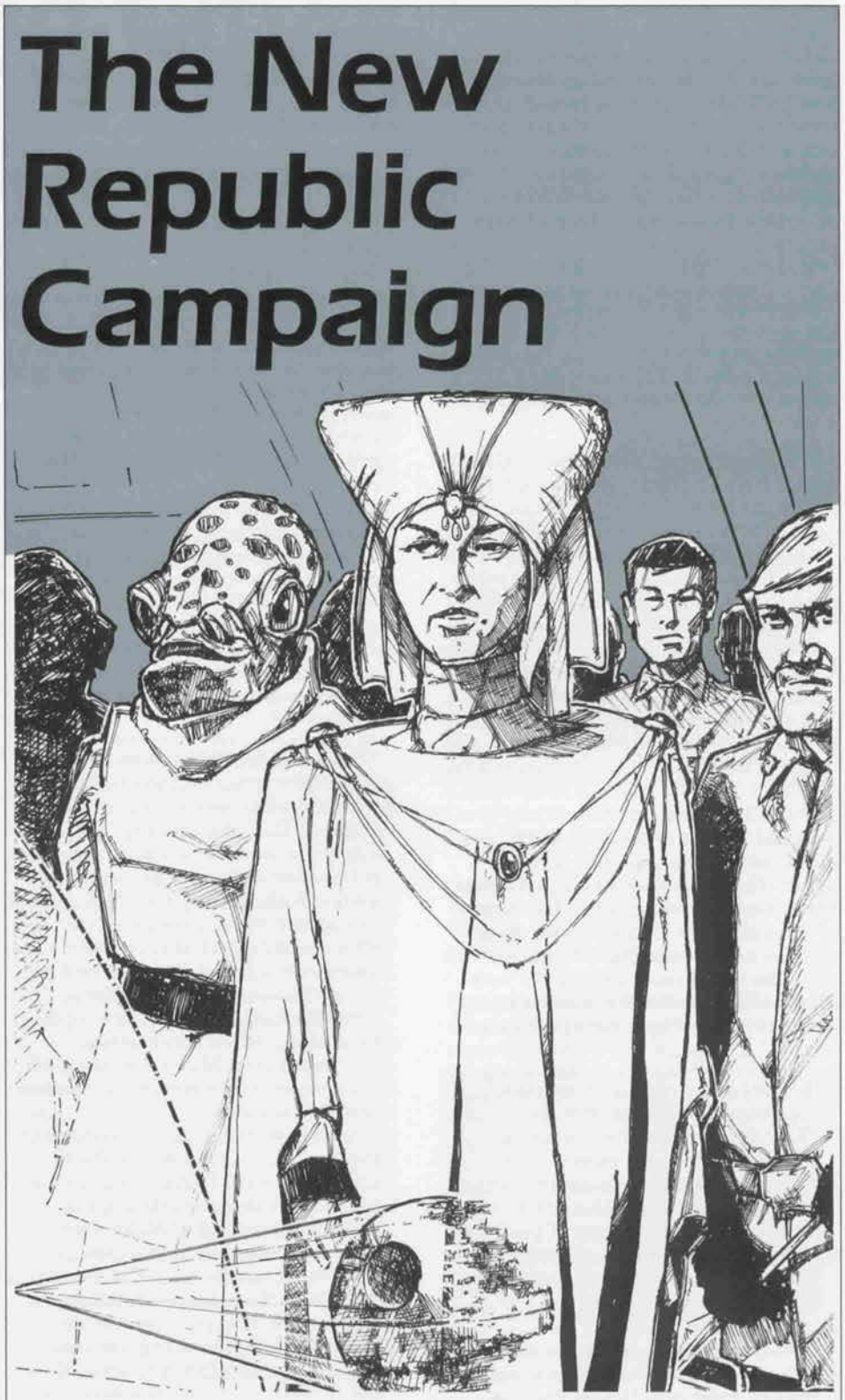
. . . The Rebel PCs rescued a group of Bothan spies and helped get the information they carried back to Alliance High Command. The information contained the secret location of the second Death Star's construction site, as well as the Emperor's personal itinerary—showing the exact time he would be visiting the location.

That accomplished, one final event must occur before the time period of the New Republic can be opened wide to an existing *Star Wars* campaign. In fact, new campaigns that want to start in this setting should also begin this way. It lends continuity and provides a connection to the events in the films, adding a "historical" feel.

Starting in a place with which everyone is familiar makes later events that much more believable for players and game masters alike.

What is this last big event? Why, the Battle of Endor, of course. All right, I know what you're saying: "What are my PCs going to do on Endor's forest moon with Han Solo, Princess Leia, and Chewbacca running around?" Actually, quite a lot. If your PCs fail in their adventure, then chances are Solo and the Princess will fail, too. There's stuff going on off-screen, and that's where the PCs are—doing their part for freedom and the Force out of the camera's eye. Out of sight, that is, until now.

For the adventure outline that follows, game masters will need a copy of *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game Second Edition* and a bit of imagination to flesh out specifics and mold it to fit existing characters and campaigns. A number of West End Games' sourcebooks could also come in handy for



**The Battle for Endor from the PCs' Perspective**

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providing more details and background. You might want to find copies of *The Rebel Sourcebook, The Imperial Sourcebook,* and *The Movie Trilogy Sourcebook*. All NPC statistics, as well as creature and important vehicle statistics, are presented at the end of this article.

## A Long Time Ago, In a Galaxy Far, Far Away

The familiar John Williams' score fills the air (yes, I always play the movie soundtracks whenever my group gathers for a session of the *Star Wars RPG*) as mood-setting words scroll back across a sea of stars.

Rebel operatives rescued Bothan spies from the clutches of the evil Galactic Empire. Now, with the information obtained by the Bothans, Alliance High Command rushes to set in motion a desperate strike at the very heart of the Empire. If the Alliance succeeds, the Imperial war machine will be thrown into chaos, left without a leader. If the Alliance fails, the last sparks of freedom will be extinguished, and a terrible, unending darkness will engulf the galaxy forever.

Think back to the last time you watched *Return of the Jedi*. Better yet, go out and rent a copy and watch it again. The adventure starts just before the Alliance briefing, when the details of the assault on Endor's forest moon and the new Death Star will be presented to the Rebel commanders. As your PCs gather to enter the briefing room, they are stopped by a Rebel commando named Lt. Page.

"I heard about your last mission," Page says in a low yet friendly voice. "Your team made what's about to happen possible. Because of that, Major Derlin thinks you should get a crack at being where the action is. How'd you like to be part of the Major's strike team that's accompanying General Solo to the forest moon of Endor?"

Give the PCs a chance to be shocked and honored, and allow them to ask a couple of questions. Before Page can respond, the babble in the briefing room quiets, signalling the start of something big. "You'll be briefed in detail after the meeting," Page informs the PCs as he hustles them into the room. "Report to Hangar Bay HF-201 as soon as this wraps up." He disappears into the crowd, looking for a place to sit or stand. The PCs should do the same.

## Episode One: Mission to Endor

The scene is the main briefing room on the Alliance Headquarters Frigate *Home One*. Hundreds of Rebel commanders of all sorts of galactic species have assembled in this make-shift war room. In the center of the room, a holoprojector shows the half-completed Death Star in orbit around the huge moon of Endor. A deflector shield is clearly emanating from the moon's surface to surround the uncompleted battle station.

The crowd has been hushed by the appearance of the Big Three. Mon Mothma, leader of the Alliance, steps forward. She is stern yet beautiful, in her 50s, dressed in the white robes of the Senate. Beside her are her top military advisers, the Mon Calamari Admiral Ackbar, and the Corellian-born human General Madine. She signals for attention.

"The data brought to us by the Bothan spies pinpoints the exact location of the Emperor's new battle station," Mon Mothma explains. "We also know that the weapons systems of this Death Star are not yet operational. With the Imperial fleet spread throughout the galaxy in a vain effort to engage us, it is relatively unprotected. But most important of all, we've learned that the Emperor himself is personally overseeing the final stages of the construction of this Death Star. Many Bothans died to bring us this information. Admiral Ackbar, please."

Ackbar steps forward and points to the Death Star's protective shield and the moon of Endor. "You can see here the Death Star orbiting the forest moon of Endor. Although the weapon systems on this Death Star are not yet operational, the Death Star does have a strong defense mechanism. It is protected by an energy shield, which is generated from the nearby forest moon of Endor. This shield must be deactivated if any attack is to be attempted. Once the shield is down, our cruisers will create a perimeter, while the fighters fly into the super-structure and attempt to knock out the main reactor."

The briefing continues, informing the gathered Rebels that General Lando Calrissian has volunteered to lead the fighter attack. General Madine, meanwhile, outlines the ground assault.

"We have stolen a small Imperial shuttle," Madine tells the crowd. "Disguised as a cargo ship, and using a secret Imperial code, a strike team will land on the moon and deactivate the shield generator."

That's the mission—a piece of cake for General Han Solo, his command crew, and his commando strike team. At the shuttle, the PCs learn that while General Solo is in charge of the mission, Major Derlin and Lt. Page are in charge of the commandos. The commandos are further divided into small teams, each under the command of a ranking officer. The PC group forms one of these teams, with one of the PCs acting as an officer.

Once on the moon, the plan quickly is to cover the distance between the landing site and the generator bunker, deactivate the shield, and get off the moon again with as few casualties as possible. Once Derlin explains this, Solo and his command crew arrive. The Heroes of Yavin are all here: Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia Organa, Chewbacca, and the droids R2-D2 and C-3PO. Next stop—the forest moon!

### Outfitting

In addition to whatever equipment the PCs are carrying, they receive the following to divide among themselves: three blaster rifles (damage 5D), three blaster pistols (damage 4D), four frag grenades (damage 5D), four medpacs, six comlinks, one portable jammer pack, two macrobinoculars, six camo-ponchos, six field ration packs (one week's supply each).

## Episode Two: Landing on the Forest Moon

The ride to the Endor system is uneventful, at least from the PCs' point of view. They're in the passenger hold with the rest of the strike team, separated from the command crew and unaware of the trouble Han has with Imperial traffic control. Feel free to invent some personalities for the other

members of the strike team if the PCs want to role play a conversation or two. Finally, a call comes back from the command deck.

"We've got clearance, Major Derlin," General Solo's voice booms from the shuttle's comm unit. "Prepare the strike team for landing."

Solo lands the shuttle and the strike team emerges to secure the area. One of the commandos takes a sensor reading to determine the distance and direction to the generator bunker. Artoo-Detoo performs a similar check to confirm the commando's findings. After a brief discussion with Major Derlin, Solo leads the strike team into the forest.

### Endor's Moon

Vast forests of 300-meter-tall trees cover the moon of Endor, and all kinds of lush foliage and thick grasses grow beneath their majestic boughs. Days are warm and bright, while the nights are cool, dark, and dangerous. The day belongs to the Ewoks, the small, furred hunters who live among Endor's trees. The nights are controlled by the nocturnal predators, creatures that roam the forest floor in search of prey.

The Ewok tribes build villages high in the trees, suspending a main platform between and around a cluster of trees. Smaller platforms hang above and below the main platform, forming an intricate living and work area high above the forest floor. Each tribe has its own tree village, hidden among the thick leaves to keep its location secret from those who pass by on the ground below.

### A Different Path

Before the scene in the film where Leia and Luke leap aboard speeder bikes to chase down the Imperial scout troopers who spotted them, another event occurs to send the PCs off in their own direction. Describe the following scene to the Rebel PCs, after calling for *Perception* rolls to determine which PC initially spots something out of the ordinary:

Out of the corner of your eye you catch movement in the trees. You turn, and there, looking down upon you from the cover of thick leaves, is an AT-ST scout walker. Once it notices that you've spotted it, the walker fires a bolt from its blaster cannon to scatter the strike team, then it disappears into the deeper forest.

A few commandos return fire, but the AT-ST speeds away without sustaining any damage. Before the entire strike team can charge after it, Major Derlin starts barking orders. He commands the PCs to give chase.

"Stop that walker at all costs," Derlin says. "Taki is scrambling its comm channels with her portable jammer. Set yours to the same frequency and stay close to it. As long as you keep the jammer going, it won't be able to report it saw us. Chase it down and make sure it can't give us away or this'll be a short visit. Maintain communication silence. Our own broadcasts can give us away just as easily as a shout by those Imperial walker jockeys."

The PCs must follow the AT-ST, keep its comm channels jammed, and destroy it before it reaches its base. The chase takes them deep into the forest, far from the rest of the strike team. Eventually, the AT-ST runs into a clump of trees and foliage too thick to push or cut through. It turns to battle the PCs. As the AT-ST attacks, have the PCs make *Perception* rolls. Any PCs who achieve Easy success or better spot one of the two walker pilots emerging from the top hatch to flee.

The pilot is attempting to get out of the jammer's range so he can report to his base. If the PCs ignore him (which is a bad idea), the bunker is notified and is ready for the strike team when it arrives.

If the PCs split up to chase the pilot, then the strike team's presence remains a secret—the better option by far.

The PCs should be able to stop the AT-ST and its crew, but the chase and battle should not be simple. It should be a hard-fought victory, full of tension, suspense, and danger. Use the scout walker to best advantage, and make the PCs fight with their brains as well as their brawn. An up-close and personal fight with an AT-ST—that's a scene that should become the stuff of legends long after the session has ended.

## Episode Two: Predators by Night

By the time the battle with the AT-ST ends, it is dusk. Night is coming soon, and the Rebel PCs are far from the rest of the strike team, the generator bunker, and the shuttle in which they arrived. They don't know it yet, but the forest floor is the last place they want to be when the sun goes down. You can have the PCs learn this the hard way, or you can have an Ewok befriend them and show them a good tree in which to spend the night.

Either way, at some point during the night the PCs meet up with one of Endor's most-terrifying predators—the octucor! This land-squid prowls the forest floor and reaches into the lower tree branches with its probing tentacles in search of Ewoks and other tender morsels. The PCs meet it either on the ground (where it surprises them by rushing out of the forest at an amazing speed for a creature so big) or from a vantage point in the trees (where, if they set a watch, they get to see it coming before it gets close enough to attack).

For all its size, the octucor moves with stealth and silence. It practically glides along on its serpentine body, undulating across the forest floor like some gargantuan snake. If the PCs are on the ground, the octucor strikes at as many targets as possible. If they are in a tree, it reaches for them while bashing against the trunk to dislodge them. PCs in the tree must match the level of success the creature achieves on a *Strength* roll with their own *Dexterity* rolls. If they fail, they are shaken from their perches. If they match the success level but roll less than the octucor, consider them stunned for the next round of combat (−1D to all actions).

Feel free to throw other predator types at the PCs during the night, but the octucor should be the worst of the bunch. In the dark, among the trunks of the giant trees that seem to stretch forever into the night sky, the octucor is a relentless, nightmarish beast. When dawn finally breaks, even the brightest rays of sun should have a hard time wiping away the terrors it wrought.

## Episode Three: What Solo Doesn't Know

The next morning, Han Solo and his command team are leaving the Ewok village. Luke Skywalker left during the night to surrender to Darth Vader. Yes, the young Jedi strolled through the night forest alone and survived!.

The Rebel PCs are busy seeking their own route to the generator bunker. Along the way they run into at least two obstacles (you can always decide to add a few more): Major Perrn and his patrol, and the dreaded Imperial siege tower. If the siege tower reaches the generator bunker, the Imperials will have the needed firepower to turn back the strike team and its Ewok allies.

### The Imperial Patrol

The Rebel PCs trek through the forest toward the generator bunker, unaware that the rest of the strike team has reached it. They are even now engaged in a desperate battle.

A speeder bike patrol under Major Perrn's command has been contacted by Imperials at the bunker. Perrn has turned his troops back toward the shield generator and is racing to lend support when he crosses the PCs' path.

Two scout troopers and their speeder bikes accompany Perrn, four assault troopers, a driver, and Perrn's landspeeder. The two groups meet on a forest path, about four kilometers from the shield generator. The two groups enter the same clearing at the same moment, and the first round of action happens simultaneously. After the first round, Perrn takes cover and barks orders, deploying his remaining forces to best advantage. Then he starts to call out to the PCs. He orders them to surrender. He tells them that their mission is doomed to failure, as their companions at the bunker have already been defeated. While he tries to deal with them through persuasion, threats, and promises of fair treatment, his troops continue to press the attack.

Perrn is not a fanatic. He has no wish to die for the New Order. When his forces are close to defeat and his own safety becomes tenuous, Perrn presents his final offer.

"You can come after me," Major Perrn calls from behind the cover provided by his landspeeder, "or you can go help your friends. I lied earlier when I told you they had been defeated. In fact, they're on the verge of taking the bunker even as we speak. But they haven't won yet. And if that siege tower reaches the bunker, your friends will be caught by surprise and blasted into submission."

What siege tower? The siege tower breaking through the trees and moving swiftly on its repulsors toward the shield generator as the Rebels look on! In the movie, of course, it never made it and the strike team won the day. In this adventure, what happens depends on the actions of the Rebel PCs.

### The Imperial Siege Tower

The siege tower is even more awesome than an Imperial AT-AT walker. It has loads of firepower, nearly impenetrable armor, and it floats about three meters above the ground on powerful repulsorlift engines. The extra support it would provide to the embattled Imperial forces could turn the tide of the conflict—if it were to reach the battlefield.

It falls to the Rebel PCs to stop it or delay it long enough for Han Solo and his troops to take out the shield generator. The PCs must keep the siege tower occupied for 12 rounds or destroy it in that same amount of time. If they fail, the tower reaches the battle and adds its guns to the rest of the Imperial arsenal.

As soon as the PCs turn to deal with the tower, Major Perrn takes off into the forest. If he can manage it, he escapes. This sets up a wonderful opportunity for the villain to return in a future adventure. However, if the PCs take him out, that's okay too.

The PCs' best chance is to take cover and engage the tower with ranged weapons and grenades. The tower pauses to deal with these attackers, as its commander believes he should be able to defeat them with little trouble. Any PCs who think to ask if they can spot a weakness should make *Technical* or *repulsorlift* repair rolls. On a Moderate success or better, a PC notices that the armor around the repulsorlift engines (located beneath the floating tower) appears weaker than the rest of the vehicle. Concentrated attacks on this area will slow and eventually stop the tower as the repulsorlifts give out.

After it becomes obvious that the PCs are targeting the repulsors, the tower commander orders six assault troopers to leap from the tower and engage the Rebels. The tower continues to use its other weapons throughout the battle. As soon as the repulsors are destroyed, the tower crashes to the ground and explodes in a wonderful display of special effects.

## As the Credits Roll

The PCs have destroyed the siege tower or delayed it so it could not reach the shield generator in time to lend additional firepower to the Imperial forces. Without its assistance, Han Solo, the strike team, and the Ewoks are able to defeat the Imperials and destroy the shield generator, making the space assault on the Death Star possible. It isn't long before the sky over Endor's moon is filled with the sight of a great explosion—the Death Star has been destroyed!

Afterward, the PCs get to join the rest of the heroes at the Ewok village for a party of epic proportions. Let them mingle with Han, Leia, Luke, Chewbacca, the droids, Lando Calrissian, Wedge Antilles, and even Nien Nunb. The war, it seems, is over. The Emperor and Darth Vader are dead. The Imperial fleet is damaged and in disarray. The Empire is leaderless and without direction. For now, the future looks bright and they deserve to celebrate the Alliance's victory in style.

But something as large and as evil as the Empire doesn't die so easily. In the next installment, we'll discuss the details of a New Republic campaign. Yes, we'll finally talk about what to do after the second Death Star blows up, and provide a base of operations from which the PCs can explore this exciting new era. Hey, is that the theme music playing? This must be the end—until next time.

## Characters, Creatures and Vehicles

**Major Perrn**
**Template Type:** Imperial Major
**Loyalty:** To the Empire
**Height:** 1.8 meters
**Species:** Human
**Homeworld:** Corutarn
**Age:** 36 Standard Years
**DEXTERITY 2D**
Blaster 4D, brawling parry 3D, dodge

5D, grenade 3D
**KNOWLEDGE 3D+1**
Bureaucracy 4D+1, intimidation 5D+1, languages 3D+2, survival 4D+1, willpower 5D+2
**MECHANICAL 3D+2**
Repulsorlift vehicle operation 4D+2, sensors 5D+2
**PERCEPTION 3D+1**
Bargain 5D+1, command 6D+1, con 4D+1, persuasion 4D+2, search 5D+1
**STRENGTH 3D**
Brawling 4D, stamina 4D+1
**TECHNICAL 2D+2**
Demolition 3D+2, repulsorlift repair 4D+2, security 4D
**Force Sensitive?** No
**Force Points:** 2
**Dark Side Points:** 2
**Character Points:** 5
**Move:** 10
**Equipment:** Blaster (4D damage), vibroknife (STR+1D damage), battle armor (+1D to STR for resisting energy weapons, +2 to STR for resisting physical damage), datapad, comlink
**Quote:** "We really can work this out in a civilized manner."
**Description:** Dressed in the ground assault battle armor favored by AT-AT commanders, Perrn looks like a formidable Imperial officer. However, while he is a good officer, he has no desire to die needlessly for the Imperial cause. He has been known to talk his way out of the worst situations—only to reappear later to win the day for the Empire.

### Imperial Scout Troopers

**Template Type:** Scout Stormtrooper
**Loyalty:** To the Empire
**Height:** 1.8 meters
**Species:** Human?
**Homeworld:** Unknown
**Age:** Unknown
**DEXTERITY 2D**
Blaster 4D, brawling parry 4D, dodge 4D, grenade 4D
**KNOWLEDGE 2D**
Survival 5D
**MECHANICAL 3D**
Sensors 6D, repulsorlift operation 4D, repulsorlift operation: speeder bike 5D+1
**PERCEPTION 2D**
Search 5D
**STRENGTH 2D**
Brawling 3D
**TECHNICAL 2D**
Repulsorlift repair 4D
**Force Sensitive?** No
**Force Points:** 0
**Dark Side Points:** 0
**Character Points:** 3
**Move:** 10
**Equipment:** Blaster (4D damage), blaster rifle (5D damage), concussive grenades (5D damage), scout armor (+2 to STR for resisting all damage), comlink
**Quote:** "If something's out there, we'll find it."
**Description:** Scout stormtroopers wear light-weight partial armor and padding over black temperature body gloves. Their helmets contain a variety of sensors and computers to help them control their speeder bikes at high speeds, even in the most hazardous terrain.

### Imperial Assault Troopers

**Template Type:** Imperial Army Assault Trooper
**Loyalty:** To the Empire
**Height:** 1.8 meters
**Species:** Human
**Homeworld:** Various
**Age:** 19 to 30
**DEXTERITY 3D+2**
Blaster 5D+2, brawling parry 5D+2, dodge 5D+2, grenade 4D+2, melee combat 6D, melee parry 5D, vehicle blaster 6D
**KNOWLEDGE 2D**
Intimidation 4D+1, streetwise 4D,

survival 4D+2
**MECHANICAL 4D+2**
Communications 5D+2, ground vehicle operation 6D+2, repulsorlift vehicle operation 5D+2
**PERCEPTION 3D+1**
Command 5D+1, search 6D+1, sneak 4D+1
**STRENGTH 2D+1**
Brawling 5D+1, climbing/jumping 4D+1, stamina 5D+1
**TECHNICAL 2D**
Armor repair 3D, blaster repair 3D, first aid 3D+2, repulsorlift repair 3D
**Force Sensitive?** No
**Force Points:** 1
**Dark Side Points:** 6
**Character Points:** 6
**Move:** 10
**Equipment:** Heavy blaster (5D damage), vibroknife (STR+1D damage), battle armor (+1D to STR for resisting energy weapons, +2 to STR for resisting physical damage), 2 concussive grenades (5D damage), comlink
**Quote:** "Stop. You don't want us to attack you."
**Description:** Dressed in the ground assault battle armor favored by AT-AT commanders, assault troopers are fully prepared to give their lives for the Empire. While not as willing to fight to the death as stormtroopers, these elite soldiers are a close second.

### Ewoks
**Template Type:** Ewok Warrior
**Loyalty:** To his tribe
**Height:** 1 meter
**Species:** Ewok
**Homeworld:** The forest moon of Endor
**Age:** Varies
**DEXTERITY 3D+2**
Bows 4D+2, brawling parry 4D, dodge 4D+2, melee combat 4D+1, melee parry 4D+1
**KNOWLEDGE 2D**
Languages 3D, survival 4D, willpower 2D+2
**MECHANICAL 3D+2**
Beast riding 4D+2, glider 5D+2
**PERCEPTION 4D+1**
Bargain 4D+2, con 5D+1, hide 5D+1, search 4D+2, sneak 4D+2
**STRENGTH 1D+2**
Climbing/jumping 3D+2, swimming 2D+2
**TECHNICAL 2D+2**
First aid 3D+2, primitive construction 3D+2
**Force Sensitive?** Yes
**Force Points:** 1
**Dark Side Points:** 0
**Character Points:** 3
**Move:** 8
**Equipment:** Bow and arrows (STR+2D damage), spear (STR+1D damage), leather pack
**Quote:** "Eetuu kachichi!"
**Description:** Ewoks are small, furred bipeds who live in tree-top villages throughout the forests of Endor's moon. These intelligent yet primitive creatures have little knowledge of the galactic civil war, as they have no space travel capability and very little contact with the rest of the galaxy. They are fierce warriors and good friends once you earn their trust.

### Octucor
**DEXTERITY 4D+1**
Melee combat: tentacle attacks 5D+1
**PERCEPTION 3D+1**
Hide 3D+2, search 4D+1, sneak 3D+2
**STRENGTH 6D+1**
Stamina 7D
**Move:** 11
**Size:** 4 meters tall, 8 meters long, 3 meter long tentacles
**Scale:** Creature
**Attacks:**
**Tentacles:** 7D
**Combat:** The octucor can attack once each round with each of its eight tentacles with no penalty. It has four tentacles on each side of its body, positioned so they can reach into the trees. If a tentacle causes enough damage to Incapacitate a target with a single attack, that target is considered wrapped in the tentacle. If not freed by an ally in one round, the target is dragged into the creature's maw and consumed.

### Imperial AT-ST
**Craft:** All-Terrain Scout Transport
**Type:** Medium walker
**Scale:** Walker
**Skill:** Walker operation: AT-ST
**Crew:** 2
**Passengers:** None
**Cover:** Full
**Cargo Capacity:** 200 kilograms
**Move:** 30; 90 kmh
**Maneuverability:** 1D
**Body Strength:** 3D
**Weapons:**
**One Twin Blaster Cannon**
*Fire Arc:* Front
*Crew:* 1 (pilot)
*Skill:* Vehicle blasters
*Fire Control:* 1D
*Range:* 50-200/1 km/2 km
*Damage:* 4D
**One Twin Light Blaster Cannon**
*Fire Arc:* Front
*Crew:* 1 (co-pilot)
*Skill:* Vehicle blasters
*Fire Control:* 1D
*Range:* 50-300/500/1 km
*Damage:* 2D
**Concussion Grenade Launcher**
*Fire Arc:* Front
*Crew:* 1 (co-pilot)
*Skill:* Missile weapons: grenade launcher
*Fire Control:* 1D
*Range:* 10-50/100/200
*Damage:* 3D

### Imperial Siege Tower
**Craft:** Ubrikkian HAVr C10 Siege Tower
**Type:** Heavy assault vehicle (repulsorlift)
**Scale:** Walker
**Skill:** Repulsorlift operation: siege tower
**Crew:** 6
**Passengers:** 12
**Cover:** Full
**Cargo Capacity:** 800 kilograms
**Move:** 30; 90 kmh
**Maneuverability:** 1D
**Body Strength:** 7D sides and top, 5D underneath
**Weapons:**
**Two Heavy Blaster Cannons**
(fire separately)
*Fire Arc:* All
*Crew:* 2 (1 gunner each)
*Skill:* Vehicle blasters
*Fire Control:* 2D
*Range:* 10-200/1 km/2 km
*Damage:* 5D
**Two Twin Medium Blaster Cannons**
(fire separately)
*Fire Arc:* All
*Crew:* 2 (1 gunner each)
*Skill:* Vehicle blasters
*Fire Control:* 1D
*Range:* 0-50/500/1 km
*Damage:* 3D

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# The Living City

## Master Etcheen's Chess Shop

**by Brian Miller**

Nestled in the heart of the merchant's district is a shop that attracts people of all ages and races—Marbol's Chess Shop.

Retired businessmen come to pass the time, enjoy a game, and share pleasant conversation. Other players participate in the weekly tournaments.

Marbol, a brilliant tactician, was once a war advisor to King Azoun. However, he grew to hate playing games with people's lives and left the king's service to turn his hobby—chess—into a career.

Marbol learned the game as a child. Highly intelligent and exceptionally well-educated, he had a natural knack for predicting his opponent's maneuvers, and he was known for winning games in record time.

Marbol traveled throughout the heart of the Realms for several years, challenging players to matches and winning games and prizes. He became the undisputed champion, dominating opponents of all ages and amassing a fortune.

However, the years caught up to Marbol, and with tired bones he decided to settle down.

Ravens Bluff was his choice, as the inland sea and the river traffic brought in new opponents every day.

Marbol's shop has a patio deck at the entrance, where all of his games are played. There is also a single room display area, a work room adjacent to a small kitchen, and lower-level living quarters.

He fashions all of the chess sets he has for sale, carving them from various woods, sculpting them from clay, and chiseling them from marble and other stones. The exquisite chess sets are displayed on glass shelves throughout his showroom. The chess pieces range in price from 1 gp to 100 gp each, and the boards from 10 gp to 1,000 gp. The more expensive the set, the more intricate the work. He even fashions sets for nobility, often putting gems in the eyes of the kings and queens.

The chess master maintains the shop without the help of employees, amazing the patrons, who wonder where the old man gets so much energy to keep the place clean and freshly painted.

Marbol's secret is an enchanted marble chess set he won four decades ago as the grand prize in a Waterdeep meet.

**Pawns (16):** Int Low; AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT Nil; SZ M (5' tall); ML 12

**Knights and bishops (4 of each):** Int Average; AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SZ M (6' tall); ML 12

**Knights' steeds (4):** Int Animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2; hp 12 each; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; SZ L (6' at the shoulder); ML 12

**Rooks (4):** Int Average; AL N; AC 3; MV 9; HD 5; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M (6' tall); ML 12

**Kings and queens (2 each):** Int Average; AL N; AC 1; MV 9; HD 8; hp 45 each; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SZ M (6' tall); ML 12

Each piece can assume human form for up to 12 hours each day. The pieces are fanatically loyal to Marbol and will protect him with their "lives." If a piece is defeated, it reverts to its marble form for 48 hours; the pieces cannot be permanently killed.

Marbol considers the pieces close friends, and after business hours they help him clean his shop, polish the other chess sets, and play matches with him. The knights (dressed in common clothes), often hitch their steeds to Marbol's wagon, and travel to nearby towns for wood, marble, and other materials for chess sets. The knights take turns animating so they can travel without stopping. The old master also has been known to hire adventures to bring back rare materials he wants to use for special chess sets.

Marbol never overworks his chess piece friends. In fact, once animated, they often perform tasks on their own initiative as favors to the chess master. This is why the painted trim always looks fresh.

The old man's great love is still the game of chess, and he is glad to teach anyone how to play.

"Chess is the summary of life," he tells newcomers to the game. "You see all the pieces? They represent every niche on the hierarchial ladder, from leaders to servants: the kings and the pawns. The pieces pay homage to the deities and to our ingenuity: the bishops and the rooks. We praise beauty in strength and presence without denying our bonds with both nature and humanity: the knights and the queens. We recreate the classic struggle for land with our laborers and mourn for the loss of loved ones we wish to bring back: the pawns crossing the board. Here, let me show you my game."

### Marbol Etcheen

*0-Level Male Human*

| | |
|---|---|
| **STR** | 6 |
| **INT** | 18 |
| **WIS** | 19 |
| **DEX** | 15 |
| **CON** | 8 |
| **CHR** | 14 |

**AC Normal:** 4
**AC Rear:** 10
**Hit Points:** 6
**Alignment:** Neutral Good
**Languages:** Common, Elvish, Halfling, Gnomish, Dwarvish
**THAC0:** 20

**Age:** 73
**Height:** 5' 6"
**Weight:** 200 lbs.
**Hair/Eyes:** White/Blue

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Chess (19), etiquette (14), cooking (19), carving (18), sculpting (18), chiseling (18)
**Magic Items:** *Enchanted chess set, Nolzur's marvelous pigments* (10 jars for making special chess sets), *bracers of defense AC 4*

Marbol is a portly, pleasant fellow, who still has lots of sparkle in his eyes. Wispy white hair rings his balding head. Marbol dresses in comfortable old clothes.

He lives well, but he donates a good portion of his income to charities. Often he trades chess pieces and boards for services and goods. And he has been known to let young boys earn a chess set, piece by piece, as they perform errands for him.

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# Road Trip!

## Two New Englanders Find Pizza in Wisconsin

**by Wayne Straiton**

The idea for a road trip came quite innocently, actually. It was just a week before ArcCon in North Carolina, and I learned the convention was running "Eye of the Leviathan." This being the only Living City scenario still on my list to be played, I began to search for a traveling companion with a vehicle. My car wouldn't be able to make the trip from Massachusetts. After several calls, Clint Heilman became my victim.

We decided since we both had time on our hands, we would stop at TSR on our return trip and visit some friends. Lake Geneva was just a little out of our way.

Undaunted by reports of a hurricane in North Carolina, we set out in search of Ravens Bluff. The windows on Clint's little Chevy were open, and Clint's white silk shirt fluttered gleefully on the back seat hook.

We rolled up the windows in New Jersey.

The trip was uneventful until a car in Virginia swerved off the road and rolled, no more than 200 feet before us. We pulled to the side, and I dashed to the wreck. When all was done, we had rescued the woman from her seatbelt, from which she was hanging upside down. Nice legs. Feeling proud, we named ourselves D 'n D, Inc. for "Damsels in Distress," and vowed to rescue any fair maidens we found.

The rest of the trip to North Carolina was uneventful. No hurricanes were sighted. The white silk shirt had fallen from its hanger and lay crumpled on the floor. That was okay; it was Clint's shirt, not mine.

ArcCon was in full swing when we arrived Saturday morning, and everyone was having a good time. It was a small convention with a homey atmosphere. I got along well with 93.75 percent of the attendees, made new friends, and my character survived "Eye of the Leviathan."

Clint suffered a casualty, though. His car's tire was eaten by a massive drain culvert, and changing the tire proved to be an ordeal.

The drive to Wisconsin was tiring. We found one more Damsel in Distress; but she didn't really count, as her car had broken down at a gas station. After staying up late the entire weekend at ArcCon, we had to accompany the songs on the radio to stay awake. Clint stopped playing country music after my second rendition of Led Zeppelin's "Cashmere," a cappella. Anyone who has heard me sing can imagine what I do to Led Zeppelin. At least Clint seemed to appreciate my demonstration of air-chainsaw to Jackal in Chicago.

It took some time to find TSR in quaint Lake Geneva that Monday morning.

Our first encounter with the TSR personnel was with Diana, the world's most awesome receptionist. She is a truly cheerful person, and does one of the best answering machine impersonations I've ever heard.

We hadn't warned anyone we were coming to visit, so Diana had to call upstairs to get us an escort to the RPGA® Network area. Skip Williams came to get us, and we noticed something out of the ordinary right away.

Skip was cheerful!

Jean was duly surprised when we popped into her office. Hugs and pleasantries exchanged, she put us to work.

Norm and Char were both on vacation the two days we spent at TSR.

Clint was put in a closet filled with a tiny Macintosh, and I was given the use of Norm's office.

This seemed reasonable to me.

While Clint was to redesign the scoring packet grids, I was to find some missing tournament disks for an upcoming Northeast convention.

I had never seen an office organized like Norm's. I could go into grisly details, but . . . (*details edited out*).

Luckily, Skip came by to drag us off to lunch, a welcome respite.

Dave Gross, the new guy at HQ who took over Skip's responsibilities, came also. Dave, as it turns out, is a former teacher and is computer literate.

We like Dave.

Skip was still being cheerful, and I was becoming concerned. He still had his usual opine nature, but he lacked his usual pointed tone. There was no hint of sarcasm or abrasiveness in his voice. I attributed his new mood to this being his last official day with the RPGA Network.

The rest of the day passed quickly. We decided to stay in town the night so we could bring convention prizes back to the Northeast's RPGA Network warehouse (i.e., Regional Director Willi Burger's house).

First, we all went for dinner at the "Video Pizza" place in nearby Twin Lakes. Don't ask. Video Pizza can't be explained; it must be experienced.

Suffice to say the food was good and the interior decorations consisted of posters of John Claude Van Dam and plastic video tape boxes.

Lake Geneva has a nice little Hilton overlooking the water. That's where we stayed. No sooner had we returned from Video Pizza and eased our tired bones into the jacuzzi when the desk clerk told us the pool was closing.

Arrgh.

Still, we felt a lot better in the morning, and we reported to work.

I spent the morning sifting through dozens of disks that I had found the previous day.

Skip passed by, and he was *still* cheerful. I began to wonder whether his affliction was contagious.

The afternoon consisted of boxing a wagonload of product to be used as prizes at several conventions along the east coast. Jean decided we could haul the prizes to save her the cost of mailing them.

Clint looked out from his closet and appeared worried when he saw the wagon. I was thinking the same thing. Big wagon, little Chevy.

We ended our stay in Lake Geneva by having dinner with the HQ staff one last time. Yes, Skip was still cheerful.

After a brief stop at the Safe House, a favorite Milwaukee nightspot which we can't avoid if traveling within a few hundred miles, we were finally on our way home.

Three thousand miles and exactly one week later, after many more conversations about the Living City but without finding any more Damsels in Distress, we rolled into Massachusetts.

We found the white silk shirt beneath a few cases of game modules.

That's okay. It was Clint's shirt, not mine.

All in all, a very memorable experience. ❑

# The Living Galaxy

## Epic Science Fiction Campaigns, Part 2

**by Roger E. Moore**

This month, we pick up our look at epic science fiction campaigns with still more MacGuffins to search for. (I should point out that this column and the last, as long as they are, merely scratch the surface of the possibilities.)

### MacGuffin Hunts: The Promised Land

Most of you probably remember the Bible stories about Moses and the Promised Land, and some of you may recall the old TV show "Battlestar Galactica," which concerned a space fleet's journey to find the lost and semi-mythical planet called Earth. Put these two concepts together—the existence of a distant homeland and a people's quest to find it—and you have another long-playing campaign set-up.

The "promised land" campaign is a spin-off of the MacGuffin Hunt—but with a very big macGuffin, the discovery of which by no means ends the quest. In fact, if the GM works it out carefully, finding the promised planet only opens a whole new set of adventures and problems for the PCs.

Structuring a promised-land campaign is not difficult. For maximum game play, you can start with a large group of PCs and NPCs, possibly all bound together by common ethnic, political, religious, or family ties. The group lives in relative poverty in some backwater area of the galaxy, having arrived at their present circumstances long ago from another world.

Some event sparks a resurgence of interest in the group's origins, and the group rediscovers or confirms its ties to a homeland on another planet. Leaders arise and begin the process of locating the other planet, handling conflicts with the foes of the group, and gaining control of the desired homeland.

Once at the homeland, however, the group might be faced with the enemy that originally seized it from the group and forced its ancestors to flee. Driving off the enemy and resettling the world will occupy the PCs for many sessions of gaming, opening up even more vistas for future one-world campaigns.

The previous plot can be modified in any number of ways. The only basic requirements are dispossessed people (from whose ranks the PCs are drawn), a widespread foe, and a lost homeland that the people must regain. In the following paragraphs, I'll set up a specific example of a long campaign that could be played out using rules for the *Star Wars, MegaTraveller, BattleTech, Mekton II,* or *GURPS Space* rules. It will work with the AD&D® SPELLJAMMER® setting, too. I chose these games because they allow for vast, long-settled areas of interstellar space, which in turn yield a long migration, across a galaxy filled with a variety of foes and allies, to a distant and nearly forgotten world.

Games with young or limited interstellar set-ups—such as the *2300 AD, Justifiers, Aliens, Space: 1889,* BUGHUNTERS™, or STAR FRONTIERS® games—are thus generally unsuitable.

**The plot:** On a remote world lives an exiled family with many members. They know little about their history, but they are aware that they are descended from the rulers of a distant planet who lost a conflict with a powerful and corrupt megacorporation. The world's leaders were captured by treachery; some were killed, and the rest were falsely charged of terrible crimes, convicted, flown across space to a forsaken colony, and dumped off, with guardian robot spacecraft in orbit around their world to keep them prisoners.

The campaign begins with the PCs (whose occupations may be fairly limited, though some military-style experience on their world is allowed) seeing what life is like on their unpleasant colony world. During the course of a minor adventure, the PCs discover that a manned spacecraft has unknowingly landed on their world. If they can get control of it, they might be able to disarm or destroy the orbiting robotic ships, then find a way to get other starships (particularly very large ones) and load up all of their family members for the long haul to—now, just where *is* their homeworld? No maps or data are available, and the PCs know it's a *long* way from their current residence.

During this time, the group has its first battles with agents of the megacorp that stole their world, and the PCs now learn about the galaxy's political situation. Making slow headway as they cross space, the PCs and their rag-tag fleet discover potential allies (other groups who hate the megacorp as much as they do) and enemies—people who work for the megacorp, are annoyed with the PCs, or wish to loot the group.

After many adventures and the eventual discovery of the location of the homeworld, the group arrives there—but their troubles have just begun.

The captive homeworld has been grossly exploited in the many years the rulers have been gone. The megacorp and its allies have destroyed the world's ecology, herded its people like cattle into slavery, and otherwise made a complete mess of things. Worse yet, the megacorp has lots of ships and bases in the system since the world was once a rich one, and asteroid mining is still good.

Now a great series of space battles breaks out, as some PCs try to rally their people on the homeworld as others try to infiltrate the enemy forces and commit sabotage.

Then a shocking discovery is made:

The homeworld first attracted the megacorp because it was also home to a dead civilization's artifacts, some of which are enormously powerful but poorly understood. The megacorp wanted the artifacts at all costs, so it eliminated all rivals. Unfortunately, it also brought in its own allies, who are now squabbling with the megacorp over ownership and the use of the artifacts. These internal divisions hamper the megacorp in its response to the PCs' uprising.

Can the PCs gain ownership and control of one or more of these ancient devices? Can the PCs use the artifacts against the megacorp and its rotten allies? If the PCs triumph, what must they contend with next in trying to rebuild their homeworld? What problems will they face politically, economically, and militarily in the future? Only the GM and the players will know for sure.

## The Big Ship Campaign

Some years ago, I prepared a long-running *Traveller* campaign involving a gigantic lost starship (the game never got underway, but I learned a lot in the process of making notes on it). I had the *Azhanti High Lightning* supplement, which detailed a huge military starship crewed by more than 600.

In the campaign, the ship would happen to enter jumpspace at the same time that a nearby black hole collapsed, warping all of space-time. The ship would drop out of jumpspace in an unexplored portion of the Milky Way Galaxy, too far from home to make it back in a lifetime. The crew would have to face a number of difficult choices, such as whether to try for home or just start exploring or colonizing local worlds and make a living there.

As I envisioned the campaign, players would have multiple PCs, usually running only one at a time. PCs would be drawn from different parts of the crew, which would be composed of vaguely described NPCs until they were activated by the players who had claimed control over them.

A particular adventure might call for a crew from a survey team; if they were captured by aliens, another PC force composed of soldiers would be activated; afterward, the ship's commanders might meet to discuss strategy and dispatch yet another survey team.

Granted, a giant starship, no matter how entertaining, is just a setting—it's not a plot. However, it so strongly affects all plots built around it that any "big ship" campaign will have very distinctive features and problems. When this setting is married to an exploration/first-contact theme, the weaknesses of the latter are diminished, and the two interact to produce a pleasant, if loosely organized and directed, campaign.

I include as weaknesses of the exploration theme the lack of a driving personal motivation for the PCs and the lack of any permanent setting—the PCs merely hop from world to world over a series of disconnected survival-style adventures. With their own huge starship, however, the PCs are now motivated to keep their ship intact, and they have a stable place to call home and store all of their acquired treasures.

If the PCs are also helping to establish young colonies across an unexplored end of space, they might also be charged with defending those colonies from outside attacks or internal threats—another powerful campaign motivator, and one guaranteed to keep the PCs sweating! The PCs are likely to be military or corporate employees with broad legal powers at their disposal on the frontiers of civilization.

Using a giant starship as the basis for a long military/action adventure, something like the "Space Cruiser Yamato" or "Macross" anime series, is another fascinating premise. This column in POLYHEDRON® Newszine issues #60-62 and 69 included a number of ideas for starship-based adventures, with the added bonus of using self-aware starships as PCs. If you are a long-time fan of POLYHEDRON Newszine, you might also look up some articles I wrote on the giant-starship topic in issues #21-22 ("Take Command of a Titan!" and "Of Great Ships & Captains," respectively).

The idea of having a campaign based aboard a generation-travel starship was explored in the old METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA™ science fiction role playing game from TSR, as noted in this column in issue #74.

In the science fiction novel arena, see George Zebrowski's *Macrolife* and James Blish's *Cities in Flight*, especially the latter. You might meditate upon the asteroid/city-state Rock of Bral, from the AD&D game SPELLJAMMER boxed set and module SJR5 *Rock of Bral*, for more "city in space" ideas.

Also worthy of exploration is the BBC TV series "Blake's 7," which chronicles a rebellion against a tyrannical interstellar government, carried out aboard a powerful starship called the *Liberator*. Only a few rebels were involved, and their fight was doomed, but the series was very popular and spawned many fan clubs. If you haven't caught some of the episodes on tape, cable, reruns, or whatever, you might look for *Terry Nation's Blake's 7: The Programme Guide*, by Tony Attwood, which might be available from book dealers at science fiction/fantasy conventions in your neighborhood. This book offers details on all 52 episodes—a small bonanza for plot-hungry GMs.

The American TV series "Battlestar Galactica," though not of particularly good quality, still suggests some interesting "big ship" plot ideas.

It recently occurred to me that the non-science fiction movies that most closely duplicate the situations and adventures you'd most likely find aboard starships are the movies about submarines. Rob Chilson's short story, "Passing in the Night" (from DRAGON® issue #102) presents an excellent picture of just how similar submarine and spacecraft environments might be. It would not strain a GM greatly to create fantastic deep-space adventures derived from films like *Gray Lady Down, Das Boot (The Boat), The Hunt for Red October, The Enemy Below, Assault on a Queen, Hell and High Water,* or *Run Silent, Run Deep.* Also look for Frank Herbert's stunning novel, *Under Pressure.*

Most such adventures would of course be military in nature, but even in a nonmilitary campaign, these ideas would be invaluable (consider that one "Star Trek" TV episode, "Balance of Terror," was directly based upon the World War II novel, *The Enemy Below*).

In a starship campaign, these concepts could be linked together against a larger backdrop, particularly one in which a competing force of starships—during a "hot war" or "cold war"—will encounter the PCs' ship.

A long-duration campaign could be founded around a merchant ship, too, such as was done in an early *Traveller* adventure, *Leviathan* (worth getting, if you can find it). One of the Azhanti High Lightning frontier cruisers from that game was converted—almost fully armed—into a merchant ship; some of its adventures were noted in the boxed set. This would lead to an interesting sort of campaign in which the heroes must "boldly go make a profit where no

man has gone before." One is led to think of Harry Mudd from the old "Star Trek" show, or the merchant prince Nicholas van Rijn, who figures in many stories by Poul Anderson (see in particular *Trader to the Stars*).

It might also be of interest to read "The Man Who Sold the Moon," by Robert A. Heinlein, or *The Space Merchants*, by Frederik Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth, though these are far removed from "big starship" epics.

Games suitable for big-starship campaigns—assuming the GM is willing to do a lot of set-up work beforehand—were listed in the columns on intelligent PC starships, noted earlier. For example, anyone who has ever played *Star Trek: The RPG* knows that you get a giant ship with 400+ crew right from the start of play.

The GM could find many ways to involve a *Constitution*-class cruiser or a smaller destroyer or scout in a long campaign beyond the "seek out new life and civilizations" dictum of the regular campaign. A Klingon-Federation war or a lost-ship campaign would do well, as loads of other plots, big and small, could be woven into these themes. And just what *did* happen to some of those "lost" ships mentioned in the books? Maybe your group can find out, for better or worse.

West End Games' *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* has a number of big ships detailed enough to be used in campaigns. The module *Black Ice*, for example, gives details and deck plans for a gigantic Imperial cargo vessel (7.8 kilometers long!) that might be captured by the PCs and used as the core of a chased-by-the-Imperials campaign, though its usefulness otherwise is rather limited.

Other big ships of more flexible design and with broader abilities appear in this game and are worth investigating as centerpieces for long campaigns: an Ithorian herd ship (in *Graveyard of Alderaan*), a giant luxury liner (in *Riders of the Maelstrom*), an Imperial Star Destroyer (in *Starfall*), and a Corellian Corvette (in the *Rebel Alliance Sourcebook*). Of these, the Corvette seems especially promising as a multipurpose starship setting; its crew size ranges from 46 to 165, providing an excellent pool from which numerous PCs can be drawn, and the deck plans are fairly detailed and worth transferring to graph paper (in 25-mm scale for use with *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game* miniatures) for any adventures involving boarding actions, hijackings, etc.

One major disadvantage of a big-ship campaign lies in the ship's vulnerability. If the ship goes, the campaign goes, too. This necessarily puts some restrictions on what you as the GM can do to the PCs' ship; having it threatened every week is not going to make for a long campaign.

A better solution is to threaten the PCs, their equipment, their jobs, their money, their sanity, etc. Arrange for minor problems to plague the ship instead of big ones—a drive needs replacing, fuel is running low, a gun turret is malfunctioning, etc. Have only small spacecraft generally be encountered and fought, with rare meetings with other titans. Look over this column in POLYHEDRON Newszine issue #64 for examples of nonlethal adventures, applying some of the points to the fate of the ship instead.

Last note: Anne McCaffrey's *The Ship Who Sang* was cited in POLYHEDRON issue #60 as one of the foundations on which "smart starship" adventures are built. This universe has recently been expanded by a number of jointly authored novels that also describe spaceships or space cities that are fully functional cyborgs. Look for *Partnership*, co-authored by Margaret Ball; *The Ship Who Searched*, co-authored by Mercedes Lackey; and *The City Who Fought*, co-authored by S. M. Sterling. (The last book was reviewed in DRAGON® Magazine issue #192, in "The Role of Books.") Any of these could provide loads of smart-starship ideas for your science fiction game campaign.

## Other Examples

### The Legacy

Instead of a promised land, one of the PCs might be seeking a particular birthright, legacy, or inheritance with the assistance of his or her allies. A young prince, hidden away since his birth after a palace revolution, might challenge the tyrannical government that overthrew his father's government. The illegitimate and forgotten daughter of a megacorp executive might inherit his entire estate, but must do battle with other claimants who know more about the estate's value—and its terrible secrets—than she does.

A prophecy on a barbarian world might single out a small group of primitive warriors and thieves, requiring them to go forth into the universe and locate a sacred relic stolen from the tribe centuries before (incidentally returning to fight off invaders of their world using high-tech weapons gained during the journey).

Examples of these sorts of situations can be found in Margaret Weis' remarkable Star of the Guardians trilogy, in which a young man must attempt to regain the galactic throne, or the tragic tale at the start of Ursula K. LeGuin's *Rocannon's World* (originally published as "Semley's Necklace").

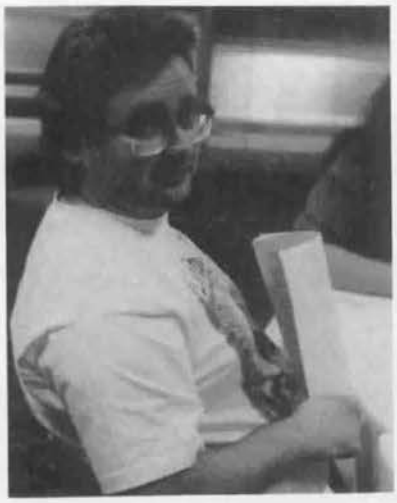
### Teacher-Prince

L. Sprague de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall*, an alternate-world novel about a modern man who is sent back to Roman times and introduces technological revolution there, serves as a model for a campaign in which stranded or shipwrecked PCs transform a primitive culture, perhaps preparing it for warfare with a dangerous enemy.

This notion (we'll call it the "teacher-prince" campaign) is used in the Tarzan, Barsoom, and Pellucidar novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs—particularly in the latter, where the explorers from the surface world spend a lot of time carving out personal empires among the natives while fighting a vile reptilian race of slave masters.

*Monument*, by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., has some curious twists on the "teacher-prince" theme, and Walter Tevis' *The Man Who Fell to Earth* twists the theme even more, featuring a humanlike alien who is sent to Earth to introduce a technological revolution solely to assist his devastated homeworld's people.

Remember that it was the mission of the American Special Forces (Green Berets) in Vietnam to go into the back country and raise up militia forces from local villages to fight the Viet Cong; highly trained PCs in a military campaign could be sent to an underdeveloped or even barbaric world to rapidly advance the population to the point where it could fight off a coming invasion. If the heroes are enslaved on a primitive planet, they might escape and lead a revolt against their masters, becoming the new Spartacuses and Nat Turners of their world (of course, we'll hope they have more luck than the two historical figures did). A "teacher-prince" campaign would work well for a gaming group having only one GM and one to three players.



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### The Colony

The colonization of a planet would also form the background for a long series of adventures. In the science fiction field, look for Marta Randall's "family-saga" novel *Journey*, the story of a colonist family's troubles and trials, as well as the Planet Builders series of young-adult science fiction novels, written by different authors under the pseudonym of Robyn Tallis.

Other science fiction tales of interest include Kim Stanley Robinson's highly acclaimed *Red Mars*, Henry Kuttner's *Fury*, Harry Harrison's *Deathworld*, and Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*. A young colony must survive many natural dangers as well as threats from "civilized" people, and the "one world" column in POLYHEDRON Newszine issues #71-73 would help flesh out the parts of a major campaign with this theme.

Of course, a space colony need not lie on a world's surface, and a campaign could be built around the maintenance of a colony such as the one in the TV show "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." This concept is much like that in a "big ship" campaign, except the "ship" stays in roughly one place. Blish's *Cities in Flight*, McCaffrey and Sterling's *The City Who Fought*, and Zebrowski's *Macrolife*, mentioned earlier, would make excellent resource material for this campaign, as would Mack Reynolds' *Lagrange Five* and the writings of Gerard K. O'Neill (*The High Frontier*), T. A. Heppenheimer (*Colonies in Space*), and other space-colony enthusiasts of the 1970s and 1980s.

You might as well look at the SPELLJAMMER setting Rock of Bral again, too! An asteroid-colony campaign in this line could be derived from reading the above and other novels, such as *Tales of the Flying Mountains* by Poul Anderson, the many Known Space tales of Larry Niven, and some of the short stories in *The Endless Frontier*, edited by Jerry Pournelle. Belters, unite!

### Kidnapped/Lost

An interesting plot line lies in Tri-Tac's *Incursion* game, in which modern human PCs are kidnapped by a UFO to be sold as slaves elsewhere in the galaxy. The humans manage to escape and take control of the UFO, but they are now lost in a maze of bizarre galactic cultures and must find their way to Earth to warn everyone of the dangers to come. The *GURPS Flight 13* adventure is an extremely strange science fiction/horror adventure about a lost airliner and the amazing journeys of its passengers (this appears to be loosely based on an old "Twilight Zone" TV episode, "The Odyssey of Flight 33").

### War, War, War

FASA's *BattleTech* game features a number of potentially long-running campaigns, all purely military and in the "go forth and conquer" style of play. Here, the issue is not the preservation of freedom but the preservation of political power. Playing out the Succession Wars or Clan Wars, as set out in the many setting and scenario booklets, could take months or years!

A campaign could be patterned after the numerous *BattleTech* paperback novels, published by Roc Books, based on this game. The plot of one *BattleTech* computer game, *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception* (by Activision), serves well as a model for a major campaign, too, as it follows the career of Jason Youngblood, a 'Mech pilot out for revenge. The *BattleTech* universe is one of the most richly detailed science fiction role playing game settings available; if a generic scenario can withstand the appearance of a 'Mech lance, it's fit for inclusion in this system. Of course, personal "no-'Mech" adventures on different worlds and starships are always possible with the *MechWarrior* supplement.

Those of you playing *Robotech* or *Mekton II* could borrow liberally from the themes and materials for the *BattleTech* and similar mecha-war games.

A mercenary warfare campaign, in which characters are part of a large interstellar armed force selling its services to the highest bidder, was encouraged in many of the early *Traveller* modules, particular *Book 4: Mercenary* and the adventure booklet on the Broadsword class of mercenary starships. Of use to GMs here are the Dorsai novels of Gordon R. Dickson, the Falkenberg tales of Jerry Pournelle, the Janissaries series by Pournelle and Roland Green, *Go Tell the Spartans* by S.M. Sterling, and the Hammer's Slammers stories of David Drake (especially the collection *Hammer's Slammers*).

Most adventures would be combat-oriented, with peripheral trips for scouting missions, political jockeying, and minor adventures between battles.

### Cold Wars & Criminals

With the experience of a 40-year-long cold war behind us, we can safely say that even in the absence of a major conflict, you can have extreme tension, danger, and adventure. Spy novels, histories of wars in Third World nations, and accounts of political jockeying could easily furnish specific events in an epic campaign based on the rivalry between two or more hostile nations scattered across one world or many.

Terrorists, spies, saboteurs, commando raids, brushfire wars—there's just no rest for the weary, as shown in the many James Bond movies. Similar threats to world peace have appeared in the movies *Patriot Games, The Atomic City, Navy SEALS, Invasion U.S.A.*, and *Hell and High Water*, all of which would adapt very well to futuristic settings.

In gaming settings, many TOP SECRET/S.I.™, *James Bond 007*, or *Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes* modules would work out as epics; see in particular the Web Wars modules for the TOP SECRET/S.I. game.

Even without a cold war, there can be high-tech organized crime groups and criminal bosses to keep the adventure pot stirred for a long-term campaign. Look up the James Bond films *Goldfinger, Diamonds Are Forever, Moonraker, A View to a Kill*, and so on, or any number of Chuck Norris films (*Code of Silence* is good). *Sneakers* and *Cliffhanger* fit in well here. You might also watch the three *Godfather* movies, too, or films about Al Capone and other modern organized crime figures. Any of these sources could be translated easily into a long science fiction campaign as villains against which the heroes must contend. A future installment might cover law-enforcement campaigns, so I'll leave further comments for then.

**"Besieged" note:** The 1986 TV movie *Under Siege* (about foreign political terrorists attacking the U.S.), the 1992 Steven Segal movie *Under Siege* (about mercenary terrorists taking over a battleship for its nuclear weapons), and the 1990 Stephen Coonts' technothriller novel *Under Siege* (about a drug lord's army that attacks the U.S.) are all equally applicable as "big crime" epic-campaign material.

# Into the Dark

## Innocence And Giant Ants

**by James Lowder**

| | |
|---|---|
| **You can't get any better** | ***** |
| **Entertaining and enjoyable** | **** |
| **There are worse films** | *** |
| **Wait for cable** | ** |
| **A waste of good tape** | * |

### Matinee

1993, 99 Minutes
MCA/Universal
**Director: Joe Dante**
**Cast: John Goodman, Cathy Moriarty, Simon Fenton**
******1/2**

The world of young Gene Loomis (Simon Fenton) centers on watching B-grade monster films, reading *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, and moving from base to base with his military family. Like most kids in early '60s America, the only things that haunt his sleep are the fantastic creations of movie-makers like Lawrence Woolsey, "the screen's #1 shock expert!" All that changes in October of 1962, when the United States and the Soviet Union square off over Cuban missile bases.

What a perfect opportunity to open a new creature feature. Well, that's the thinking of shlockmeister Woolsey. As the missile crisis unfolds, he travels to Gene's hometown—Key West, Florida—to premiere his latest flick: *Mant*. ("Half-man, half-ant, all terror!") Gene and Woolsey cross paths and become friends. They are kindred spirits, devotees of an innocent type of horror film that would soon be made ludicrous by the real-world horrors of nuclear politics.

And that's the real theme of Joe Dante's *Matinee*: America's loss of innocence in the early '60s. Through the looking glass of the film we are given a glimpse of day-to-day life in a very different world from ours, a place where juvenile delinquents spout bad beat poetry and people believe in the usefulness of "duck and cover" drills. Fortunately, all this thematic material is wrapped around likeable characters and a solid story. It's impossible to miss the didactic elements of *Matinee*, but you won't feel bludgeoned by them.

The most consistently entertaining parts of *Matinee* highlight Dante's nostalgic recreation of early '60s genre films and B-movie hucksters. The charming but harmlessly dishonest Lawrence Woolsey—played expertly by John Goodman—is clearly an amalgam of such real-life directors as Roger Corman and William Castle. (Corman veterans John Sayles and Dick Miller appear in *Matinee* as Woolsey's cronies, and the stage show tricks used to promote *Mant*—Atomo-vision and Rumble Rama—bear more than a passing semblance to tricks Castle employed in such legendary films as *The Tingler* and *House on Haunted Hill*.)

And let's not forget *Mant* itself. This movie-within-a-movie holds up wonderfully as a twisted parody of '50s and '60s sf films like *The Fly* and the classic giant ant flick *Them!*, right down to the silly, stilted romance and the pseudo-scientific explanations.

### Them!

1954, 93 Minutes
Warner Brothers
**Director: Gordon Douglas**
**Cast: James Whitmore, James Arness, Edmund Gwenn, Joan Weldon**
*********

Films I loved as a kid rarely hold up well two decades later. *Them!*, a classic of atomic paranoia, remains a glowing exception.

When state trooper Ben Peterson (James Whitmore) discovers a little girl wandering in the desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico, little does he suspect that he's rescued her from the pincers of a giant ant horde. Seems the 1945 A-bomb tests at White Sands have mutated the industrious little fellows, leaving them screeching bus-sized monsters that reek of formic acid. And thanks to an exceedingly effective soundtrack, you won't soon forget the sound of these beasties.

Peterson, along with FBI agent Graham (James Arness) and a father-daughter team of government scientists (Edmund Gwenn and Joan Weldon), battles the giant ants. But before they can wipe out the nest in New Mexico, two queens escape and lead them on a hunt across the West Coast.

The plot and relationships here are altogether standard, right down to the bristly romantic subplot between Arness and Weldon, though the film remains entertaining because of solid directing and a talented cast. Edmund Gwenn's portrayal of the elder Dr. Medford is a classic, placing him in the movie scientist Hall of Fame alongside Cecil Kellaway (*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*) and Edward Van Sloan (1931's *Dracula* and lots of other Universal horror flicks). Watch for cameos by Fess Parker (TV's Daniel Boone) and William Schallert (*The Patty Duke Show* and *Matinee*).

### House on Haunted Hill

1958, 75 Minutes
Allied Artists/CBS-Fox
**Director: William Castle**
**Cast: Vincent Price, Carol Ohmart, Richard Long**
*****1/2**

From the producer-director of such gimmick classics as *The Tingler* (filmed in "Percepto") and *Thirteen Ghosts* (filmed in "Illusion-O") comes this intriguing Old Dark House thriller. Vincent Price stars as Frederick Loren, a rich gent who offers five people $10,000 to spend the night locked in his mansion (the site of numerous murders in the past). Of course, strange things start to happen as soon as the doors are locked: chandeliers plummet, people get whammed on the head by unseen assailants, and creepy-looking women float across rooms.

Price is surprisingly restrained in the lead here, especially since his part could easily be played with lots of curtain chewing and eye rolling. The rest of the cast is equally sound, especially ace character actor Elisha Cook, Jr. and TV veteran Richard Long. The scares are all on the level of a neighborhood haunted house, but the murder mystery plot is well-wrought enough to keep most of you awake.

Castle used his much-touted "Emergo" process for *House on Haunted Hill*, which basically meant that a fake skeleton shot over movie-goers' heads at a particular moment in the film. ❑

War Recovery

The GAMMA WORLD® game concerns the slow rebuilding of civilization after a world-wide war—a great theme for a campaign that could effectively run forever. The theme reappears in the three Mad Max movies (*Mad Max, The Road Warrior,* and *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*) and numerous other post-atomic films and books.

TimeLine's *Morrow Project* game and Leading Edge Games' *Living Steel* system are also interesting, centered around the trials of humans who survive devastating wars in suspended animation; they must now, many years later, emerge to rebuild their ruined homeworlds.

This theme shows up in the movies *Genesis II* and *Planet Earth*, and H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* is similar (the movie form of the latter is good, too). PCs could be either "sleepers" or "barbarians."

Earth as a ruined homeworld appears in Palladium's *Robotech*, GDW's *Twilight: 2000*, and FGU's *Aftermath* systems, where again PCs must survive and rebuild; GMs for interstellar role playing games could borrow much from these games. In a similar but less devastating vein, you could derive a war-and-recovery campaign based around the huge land holdings of some family dynasty, such as in the novel and film *Gone With the Wind.*

It is of course possible to develop a campaign in which the recovery is being made from a vast natural disaster. Science fiction is certainly full of potential world-killing events, from meteor crashes to solar flares and more. However, warfare provides an extra set of adventure hooks in the form of rival political and military forces, and in many ways can be preferred to the "natural" solution.

It must be admitted that the sense of collective guilt put upon the PCs in a war-created holocaust ("Our ancestors created this mess, and we can either make it worse or fix it again") is a powerful motivator. There is also the tendency in a natural disaster to feel that life is unfair, perhaps spoiling the sense of cosmic justice in the campaign's theme. The choice is up to you.

## Bandits & Pirates

I'm assuming that the heroes aren't going to be the criminals, though the standard "Robin Hood" campaign could be dragged in (see Steve Jackson Games' *GURPS Robin Hood* book for the best set-up information). If the players want to role play criminals, perhaps they could take out their antisocial feelings in a privateer campaign in which they get to raid enemy shipping and bases or act as government-supported bandits and revolutionaries deep in enemy territory (sort of like one of the CIA's "secret armies").

For helpful hints, see the AD&D SPELLJAMMER article, "Avast, ye swabs, and heave to!" in DRAGON Magazine issue #183, by L. Richard Baker III. There are loads of movies and novels one can choose from in establishing a campaign, with the movie *The Wild Bunch* being of particular help. In historical works, look up details on the Caribbean pirates and the English admiral/buccaneer Sir Francis Drake.

## Revenge!

As any fan of Don Pendleton's Executioner series knows, it was when organized crime leaned on the Executioner's family that he declared his highly personal war on those who had hurt the ones he loved. *The Count of Monte Cristo* (in either book or film versions) details the long-running plot by an unjustly imprisoned man to take revenge on his enemies, which he does in thorough and shocking fashion. Captain Nemo, the enigmatic commander of the submarine in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Beneath the Sea*, was similarly motivated to destroy those who had enslaved him and killed his family, and an ex-CIA analyst and a terrorist battle it out with each other because of desires for personal vengeance in the movie and novel *Patriot Games.*

The only problem with this campaign is the one encountered by the Count of Monte Cristo once his vengeance was complete—he had nothing left to do. The Executioner solved this, of course, by just selecting another series of targets (he had acquired a lot of enemies, anyway, and the ranks of the organizations he attacked were replenished in time).

The Marvel Comics' character known as the Punisher is another role model here, and his adventures could be studied by a GM for re-use. Also think of the many Nazi-hunters in the world who have tried to track down and bring to justice those guilty of war crimes during World War II (this idea strays into the MacGuffin Hunt area, but it could be expanded to include destroying any evil organizations created by or linked to those who are hunted).

Be warned that this sort of campaign is likely to be violent and bloody, and thus might not be to everyone's taste. The hero or heroes are also likely to have short lifespans. Think about this one carefully.

## And All The Rest

Finally, interested GMs would do well to read through the multimodule series adventures of role playing games outside the science fiction field to see how they handle long-playing quests (and to steal ideas). The AD&D, *Call of Cthulhu*, and *Pendragon* games are particularly rich with epic adventures. Think of what science fiction adventures you could develop from reading through the campaign modules *Vecna Lives!, Horror on the Orient Express,* or *The Boy King* for the above systems, respectively (granted, you will need a lot of alien monsters, psionics, and so forth, but it might be worth it).

Closer to home, the science fantasy *Shadowrun* game has a critically praised adventure called *Harlequin* that may be of interest for its pacing, set-ups, and plot. You might do well to look at the *Watchmen* supplement for Mayfair's *DC Heroes* game and various series modules for the *Marvel Super Heroes* game from TSR. You might also skim through some comic books for their ideas—they have a lot.

My thanks to Scott Jenkins (FASA Corporation); Norm Ritchie, Karen Boomgarden, Bill Slavicsek, and the DRAGON Magazine staff (TSR, Inc.); and Loren Wiseman (GDW) for their valuable help in suggesting important bits for this and the previous column. I must also thank *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, by John Clute and Peter Nichols, which was released this year from St. Martin's Press. A richer source of gaming ideas you will never find. Look for it at your local library.

In the next issue, we continue our look at epic campaigns with tips on how to design and play through them, linking small adventures into a larger whole. Until then, enjoy your living galaxy.

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# Heart Of Evil

## A Faerie, Queen, And Country Adventure

**Transcribed by William W. Connors**

### Part Three

*Wherein the investigation concludes*

It was some time before the police concluded there was nothing more to learn from the body of Professor Kollsman. When that juncture arrived, Lestrade turned his attention to me and the others who had seen the great beast.

I must confess I found his interrogation quite tiresome.

By the time we were permitted to leave the museum, I was exhausted.

"Dr. Watson?" came a soft voice.

I turned and saw Miss Charteris.

"May I join you? I wish to talk to you about . . . what has happened."

"Certainly, my dear," I responded, eager to do whatever I might for so fragile a creature. "I am on my way to my lodgings at Baker Street, if you would care to walk with me."

She fell into step beside me. At first I thought to slacken my pace to make her stride more comfortable, but I soon found myself falling behind her and having to step more quickly. After we had walked a short distance in silence, she began to ask about the case. I assured her that Holmes would put an end to this business before long.

"He is on the scent," I said. "I have seen him this way before, and it always foreshadows triumph."

She seemed comforted by this and favored me with an elegant smile.

"If there is anything I can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to ask," she offered.

I was about to dismiss this remark as mere politeness when something occurred to me. If she had worked closely with Professors Lawson and Kollsman, perhaps she might shed some light upon the mysterious tablet I carried.

"What do you know of the stone that Professor Lawson was studying?" I asked, trying to keep my voice conversational. She looked taken aback by the question, and I assumed that I had been too blunt. Still, this look faded quickly and she proceeded to provide me with what information she could.

"I know he had translated the first part of the inscription," she began. "It was something of a fairy story, I believe, or a myth. From what I know of it, the whole thing seemed rather dark."

"Indeed," said I. "Please continue, for it may be of utmost importance."

"The plates told of a young woman. Her name was Ahmentet, and she was the daughter of the pharaoh. She also had a brother, whose name is not recorded. In fact, there is some evidence that all references to this brother were stricken from records of the time."

"Good heavens," I responded. "Why should such a thing be done? Was the man a bastard son, or perhaps some disgrace to the family?"

"No, Dr. Watson. From what Professor Lawson was able to translate, it seems he was simply evil. The records of Ahmentet's life indicate she was as flawless and kind a woman as the world could ever hope for. The account speaks of her as stunningly beautiful, kind, a talented artist, and a generous soul. None, it seems, could find fault with the young princess."

"And her brother?" I asked. I was quite interested in the tale, although I doubted that it could truly shed much light upon the matter. Still, the telling seemed to be doing some good for Miss Charteris. With every passing word, she seemed to be building her confidence. Knowing the shock that she had suffered, I could not help but feel that this was a good thing.

"Her brother was everything she was not," answered Miss Charteris. "He was cold and wicked, a brute said to have given himself over to the darkest of powers. Curiously, however, the princess seemed to have a spot in her heart for her vile sibling. Indeed, when her brother was ill and on the verge of death, Ahmentet rushed to his side. She even summoned one of the priests. It seems there was some business to be transacted before the man's death."

"And what might that have been?" I asked, shifting my package from one arm to the other in an attempt to relieve the discomfort of the burden.

"Professor Lawson never found out," she said calmly. Then, noticing that the weight of the artifact was troubling me, she offered to carry it. I thanked her, but indicated the sign above her head. Our conversation had carried us to Baker Street.

She leaned toward me and spoke in an almost conspiratorial whisper. "Dr. Watson, may I join you for a bit longer? I should like to see the sort of nest a man like Mr. Sherlock Holmes keeps."

I chuckled. It was not the first time someone had asked for some glimpse into the personal life of the great detective.

I took her arm and said I should be delighted if she would join me for tea and perhaps a light supper. I knew Mrs. Hudson, our landlady, would be good enough to put something together and told her as much. "Further," I continued, "when Holmes returns, he will want to hear your story."

"Do you expect him soon?" she asked, as I slipped my key into the lock and opened the door.

"No," said I. "He will no doubt wish to study the situation at the museum in some depth, although I can hear him cursing the police now for getting in the way of his investigation."

At that, we ascended the stairs to my lodgings.

I indicated that Miss Charteris should have a seat while I rang for Mrs. Hudson and requested supper. With the latest in what was becoming a series of half-hearted complaints about the queer hours of her tenants, she assured me something would be brought up soon. I thanked her and returned my attention to the girl. She smiled, and I took a seat opposite her, carefully placing the artifact on Holmes' work table. After a few minutes of idle chatter, our meal arrived.

"What more can you tell me of Professor Lawson's work?" I asked, hoping there might still be something to learn from his assistant.

"Quite a bit," she said, looking up from her untouched sandwich and tea. In that instant a dramatic change came over her, and horror such as I have never known swept through my body.

Her eyes, formerly bright and clear, were now harsh and evil. The whites had turned yellow and hard, as if she were in the last stages of jaundice. At the center of her eyes was no trace of an iris or pupil. I found myself unable to

break her gaze. Her skin, which had been smooth and fair, was withered and brown now, as if it were old, worn leather. Her lips parted, nothing more than dark brown slivers against the horrible skin, and I saw a row of needlelike teeth that were as yellow and vile as her eyes.

My first instinct was to cry out, but I could not. I thought that I must spring to my feet and flee from this mummified terror, but my legs would not respond. I found myself utterly unable to move.

I felt a pain in my chest. It was the same horrible sensation I had experienced in the museum when the great beast was upon me. I heard the hammering of my heart in my ears. Then there was something more. I could hear the beating of another heart. While it matched my own, palpitating in perfect time with the roaring in my own chest, I knew that it came from without. Whatever the nature of the foul thing that had been Miss Charteris, I knew now that the beating of its heart and my own were as one.

"You see, Dr. Watson, I am Ahmentet," the creature hissed in a voice that carried with it such an odor of corruption I almost lost consciousness. "I lived long before your kind was born, and I shall remain long after you are gone."

"All I have told you about my past is true. I did rush to my brother's side, sending for a priest to join us. I knew my brother would be judged upon his death. The gods would look into his heart and see the evil that he had done. They would know that he had acted against even them, and his fate would be eternal torment. I could not allow this.

"The priest arrived as my brother sank deeper and deeper into oblivion. I told him his task, and he reluctantly agreed. Working quickly, he used a ceremonial knife to cut my brother's tainted heart from his body."

"Good Lord," I gasped. "Do you mean that you had your own brother murdered?"

"Murdered?" she laughed. "Far from it, Doctor. My plan was to save him. While the still beating heart of my brother was put aside, the priest moved to me and cut out my own heart. Then, while an invocation to the gods kept our spirits from leaving this world, he exchanged our hearts."

As she said this, she opened the tattered rags of her tunic to show me the horrible cavity in her chest. A great wound stood open there, with a black and shrivelled tissue that I could only assume to be her brother's heart at its center. In time to the pounding in my own chest, that putrid muscle pumped and strained. A black ooze, perhaps all that was left of the ancient blood of Ahmentet, dribbled from the organ.

"You see, Dr. Watson, my plan was simple. When the gods looked into his heart, they would see no taint of the evil that had ruined his life. He would be granted passage into the afterlife."

I was horrified. This tale was more than my mind could grasp. Still, I recognized the great danger I was in. This creature, whatever its origin, had already killed many men, and I could see no reason to believe I was not soon to be counted among that number. I began to inch toward the desk drawer that held my revolver.

"But what was to become of you?" I asked, trying to hold back an attack long enough to arm myself.

"I would be damned, Doctor. I would suffer eternally for the things that my brother had done. In my soul, however, I would be at peace."

"Something seems to have gone amiss," I offered, feeling foolish at so obvious a statement, but at a complete loss for anything else to say.

"Indeed. The gods were not fooled. They looked into my chest and saw that the heart which beat there was not my own. I was condemned to remain in this world, neither dead nor alive. Further, I was forced to feed upon the living hearts of my peers. For decades I sustained myself at their expense, until, at last, I grew complacent and allowed myself to be captured. They sealed me in that temple, trusting my eternal life to the gods.

"For centuries, I was alone. Deprived of the hearts that could sustain me, I sank into a horrible trance. Would that I had died. Instead, I remained aware. As the centuries rolled by outside my tomb, I felt the hunger in my soul burning every minute of every day. I cannot describe the agony."

At last, I had reached the edge of the desk. Moving as quickly as I could, I pulled open the drawer, plunged my hand inside, and drew the weapon. Swinging about, I cocked the hammer and took aim at the creature. Much to my horror, however, I discovered she was gone.

In her place stood the frightful jackal that had attacked me previously. I brought the gun down, attempting to correct my aim, and discharged it. On the far wall glass shattered as the bullet went wide of its mark and pierced the window. I made ready to fire again, but the canine leapt upon me, and the weapon tumbled out of my grasp.

I managed to roll to one side as the impact drove me back against the desk. My knees buckled and I toppled, the beast springing clear before I hit the floor. As I lay there, gasping for every bit of oxygen that I could draw, the creature returned to stand over me.

At that moment, the door to our lodgings burst inward. The jackal snapped its head around. There, looking for all the world as if he was used to coming across such scenes as this, was Holmes. He stepped forward quickly.

"Thank Providence!" he cried. "I am not too late." With that, he drew forth a long, straight knife. It was the one which had been left behind at the museum. Light glinted off of the blade, seeming to hypnotize the beast.

I saw my chance and took it. Ignoring the pain in my chest, I grabbed the gun and swung it to bear on Ahmentet. As rapidly as I could, I fired. Three times the gun roared like thunder in the tiny room before my strength failed me and I dropped the weapon again.

My hands were shaking so that my aim could not have been good. Still, at that distance it was impossible to miss. Three bullets tore into the jackal's body, and the impact carried it into the air and well across the room.

Holmes took several quick steps toward me and extended a hand. Gratefully, I met his grip and he helped me to my feet. "I am surprised that your firearm proved useful against the beast," he remarked in what might well have been a whisper. Before I could express my own delight that it had, a hollow laughter filled the room.

"It did not," said Ahmentet. I rolled my head to the side and brought my gaze to rest upon her, seeing that she had returned to the mummified form that I assumed to be her true state. Her eyes burned, and a sense of evil radiated outward to fill us with dread.

Holmes turned sharply, stepping between me and the beast. The great detective placed the Egyptian knife in my hand. With one arm behind his back, he made a gesture of passivity. Although the pain in my chest subsided, I still felt unready for any strenuous exertion.

"So this is what remains of the lovely Ahmentet," said Holmes, stepping toward the loathsome creature. He circled slowly to one side, causing the creature

to turn away from me.

I assumed that Holmes had dropped the weapon into my possession with the intent that I use it upon the creature. Perhaps its link to Ahmentet's past would give it some power over her. The idea that Holmes might have miscalculated, that the knife might prove as impotent as the gun, did not enter my mind.

"I understand all that transpired when the temple was opened," Holmes said. "Please correct me if I am wrong on any point, and excuse any oversights that I might make. Yours is, I confess, a most singular case.

"When the temple wall was first breached, you were asleep, unable to survive because of your isolation and unable to perish because of your curse. It must have been quite horrible. Still, the introduction in your tomb of living flesh would have drawn you back from that netherland.

"When you regained the power of movement, you struck quickly. I assume that your first victim was one of the native bearers. After that, when you had satisfied the ages-old hunger that burned within you, you struck again. This time, you were not the savage tiger in the jungle, this time you were the hunter amid his prey. You took the life of Miss Charteris, burned her body to make it unrecognizable, and then assumed her form. I guess that you did this through some aspect of blackest sorcery. You returned to the expedition camp and took her place.

"There, you claimed the lives of the other members of the expedition. I would think that this was a bit rash of you, as it might well have given away your presence and identity, but I take it that the hunger left you no choice."

The creature hissed a shallow laugh. "You amaze me, Mr. Holmes. How did you come by this knowledge, and what do you know of my magical powers?"

"I am not accustomed to answering the questions of murderers," said Holmes. "But I am inclined to consider this a special case. Your identity was not difficult to discover, especially when I wired the police in Cairo and learned the particulars of the burnt body.

"As for the understanding of your magical powers, I can take no credit for that. When I dispatched my communication to Egypt, I also took the liberty of consulting a friend in Holland who is, I believe, perhaps the most noted authority on the supernatural alive today. He was able to give me more than enough information to determine what you might be up to in England."

"Indeed," growled the creature. "You have been working diligently. I admire you, Mr. Holmes. You have done remarkably well in so short a period of time. Did your expert tell you I was impervious to all weapons and harm?"

"But what of this?" I cried, lunging forward. I brought my arm sweeping down and buried the ancient weapon in the creature's back. To my horror, it was no more effective than the bullets. Indeed, they had at least knocked Ahmentet's jackal form off its feet. This seemed to do nothing but anger the creature. With a horrible roar, I was grabbed in two powerful arms and raised up into the air. For a second, Ahmentet held me above her withered head as if I weighed nothing.

At that moment, Holmes struck. Dashing forward, he produced another knife. I saw a glint of light off a nick in the blade and recognized it as the weapon which had been used to kill Lawson and Kollsman.

Before Ahmentet could react, Holmes deftly cut into the exposed breast of the creature. To my horror, he drew out the ancient and withered heart. The creature howled in pain and brought me crashing into Holmes, wielding me as if I were some great bludgeon. The two of us sprawled away, crumbling into a heap at the foot of the door.

Then, the beast was upon us. I had fallen on top of Holmes and was, therefore, the first to be attacked. Rather than the fatal blow I expected, however, the creature merely swept me aside. I saw at once the reason for this action, Holmes had dropped the beast's corrupted heart. With a great lunge, Ahmentet bent low, grabbed up the obscene tissue, and dropped it back into the cavity that scarred its chest. At once, the organ was grafted into place.

As sudden as this regeneration was, however, it seemed not at all what Ahmentet expected. A terrible howl of surprised agony tore into the air. The creature staggered for a second and then toppled, crashing to the floor and breaking apart into ancient bits of frail, mummified flesh that had the consistency of dry paper. The ringing cry of the thing faded away, leaving Holmes and I in a deathly silence.

As I sat stunned upon the floor, Holmes got to his feet and chuckled. Dusting himself off as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, he offered me a hand and helped me to my feet.

"Well, Watson," he said. "Now that was hardly what you could call a typical end to one of my investigations."

"No, indeed," I stammered. "But what happened to the creature? I can only suppose that its boast of invulnerability was unfounded and that this mysterious dutchman put you onto the right scent."

"Ah, well, I am afraid that I am guilty of gambling a bit there, Watson. You see, Ahmentet was indeed immune to harm by any normal weapon. In fact, even cutting its heart from its chest would not have been enough to destroy it. I had to see to it that the heart it returned to its breast was the true heart that was cut from the body of Ahmentet so many centuries ago."

"I don't understand." I confessed.

"When my investigations revealed the true nature and identity of the threat, I inquired as to the other relics recovered from the temple. As I had expected, there was a small golden box listed among the inventory. I borrowed it, quite without the knowledge of the museum staff, and examined its contents. Imagine my surprise when I found that it contained a shrivelled, blackened heart that, against all rational thought, was still beating. I replaced the box, sans its macabre cargo, and made my way here at once.

"When you attacked, as I hoped you would, the creature was certainly convinced that I could not harm it. Rushing forward while you held the beast's attention, I cut the heart from the body. In the confusion that followed, I arranged to pocket the heart of evil and drop the other one onto the floor where Ahmentet would see it. As soon as her true heart was returned to her body, her soul was released from this life and now rests wherever her forgotten gods have seen fit to send it."

As he spoke, Holmes drew forth a wadded handkerchief. He unrolled the thing and I saw the twisted heart again. As I watched, it shuddered and ceased its disgusting pulsations. Like the body on our floor, it assumed the texture and appearance of dried paper.

"Good Lord," I muttered, unable to come to grips with all that had transpired. "What are we to do now?"

"Well," said Holmes, "I suggest we get this broken window fixed at once. If you will notice, the temperature outside has dropped sharply, and I suspect that we are in for a very chilly night."

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